



# Making sports accessible for all: The time to act is now

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**Making sports accessible  
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## FOREWORD

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Regular physical activity, including participation in sports, positively impacts health and wellbeing in myriad ways, including: reducing the risk of chronic physical health conditions, such as diabetes and obesity; reducing the instance and impact of depression and anxiety; and improving self-esteem and prosocial behavior. These benefits hold true for all segments of the population. Yet persons with disabilities (PWDs) are less likely to engage in sports, often due to insufficient efforts by sports organizations, schools, governments, and policymakers to make these activities more inclusive.

This report provides an overview of the key issues relating to inclusivity and sports and potential solutions to address them. Part 1 examines issues of health equity through para sport. Part 2 highlights movements to advance sport opportunities for people with disabilities. Part 3 looks at the obstacles to sport participation for PWDs in Qatar, specifically, and Part 4 looks at examples of good practice in Qatar, drawing out recommendations for future improvement.

We hope that this report will inspire schools, governments, sports authorities, and the wider sporting community to make sports more inclusive and encourage participation for all.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Afdhal'.

**N Sultana Afdhal**

Chief Executive Officer  
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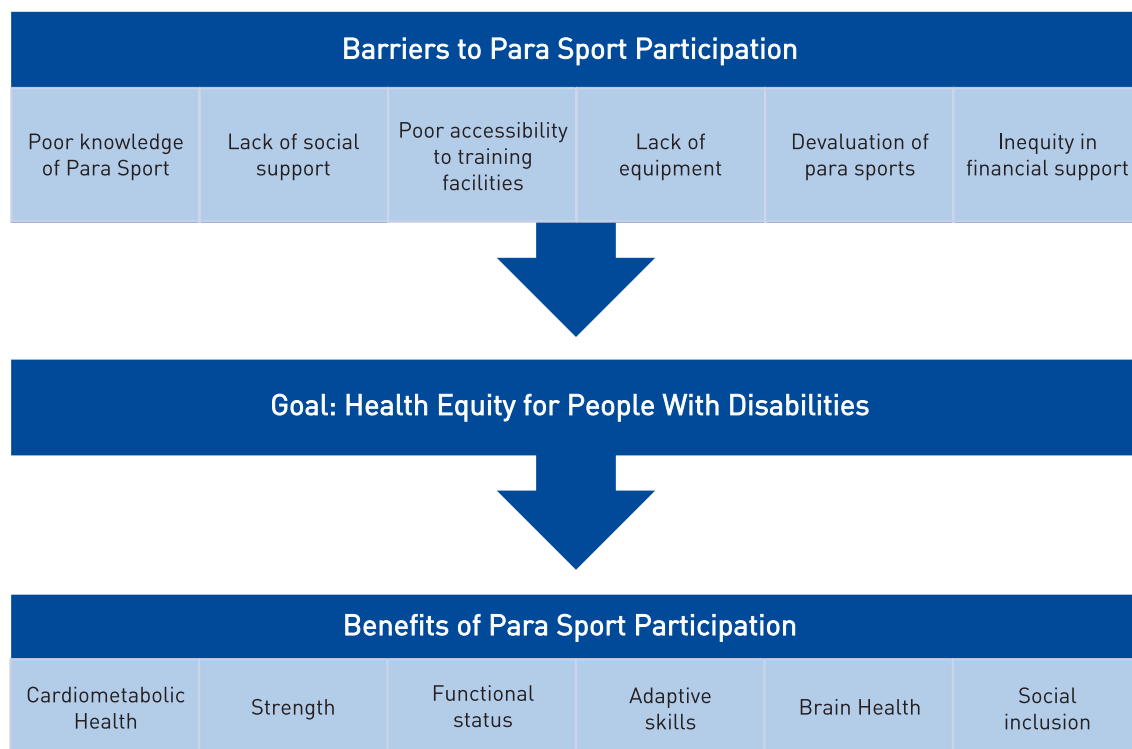
# PART 1: OPTIMIZING HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH PARA SPORT

Kristina Fagher, Stephanie DeLuca, Wayne Derman, Cheri Blauwet

Nearly one in five of the world's population lives with a disability.<sup>1</sup> While physical activity, including sports participation, is important for all, people with disabilities are at inherent risk for low engagement. This can result in an increased risk for chronic disease related to a sedentary lifestyle, such as cardiometabolic disease and mental health conditions.<sup>2</sup> In fact, people with a disability are 16–62 percent less likely to meet physical activity guidelines.<sup>3</sup>

Barriers to sports participation include poor knowledge of para sport (for example, which sports are available, how to find training or practice opportunities), lack of social support, poor accessibility to training facilities, lack of equipment, and the devaluation of para sport across society (see Figure 1)<sup>4</sup>. An additional concern is the inequity in financial support for para sport, especially in low-resourced environments. Even in high-income countries, para sport is often underfunded compared to elite sport for athletes with no disability. Also, data has shown that Paralympic athletes do not have the same opportunities as Olympic athletes.<sup>5</sup>

**Figure 1: Key summary points**



This inequity begins early in life, given that children with a disability are often excluded from physical education sessions or marginalized within the school sports system.<sup>6</sup> This section aims to promote health equity through para sport by highlighting such health disparities for the Sports and Exercise Medicine (SEM) community.

## Health benefits of para sport

The benefits of physical activity and sports participation for the general population include improvements in physical and mental health, the development of social skills, and a positive impact on health economics through disease prevention and treatment. Likewise, exercise and sports participation provide many health benefits to people with disabilities.

### Cardiometabolic health

Evidence shows that aerobic exercise improves waist circumference, insulin sensitivity and bladder function in people with a spinal cord injury (SCI).<sup>7,8</sup> Among stroke survivors, aerobic exercise reduces blood pressure and cholesterol concentrations.<sup>9</sup> Studies specific to other para athlete groups have shown improvement in cardiovascular parameters such as peak oxygen uptake, cardiac output, and respiratory function.<sup>10</sup> However, few studies have assessed the longitudinal effect of exercise on chronic disease prevention for individuals with a disability. Current exercise recommendations are based on the general population, with the expectation that all people – able-bodied and disabled – will experience similar health benefits from physical activity and sports.

### Strength

Data supports that many para athletes participating in wheelchair sports have higher upper body strength values compared to both able-bodied and disabled non-athletes.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, strength training can reduce pain, optimize lean muscle mass, and improve lipid profiles in people with SCI.<sup>12</sup> In individuals with cerebral palsy and Parkinson's disease, strength training can improve muscular conditioning through neurological and structural adaptations.<sup>13,14</sup>

### Functional status and adaptive skills

Individuals with disabilities such as limb deficiency, visual impairment, and intellectual impairment, benefit greatly from aerobic and anaerobic exercise, as it has the potential to improve functional measures such as co-ordination, balance and mobility.<sup>15,16,17</sup>

For people with an intellectual disability, sports participation allows the individual to learn and practice adaptive skills such as following routines and rules, personal care, and communication.

## Brain health and social inclusion

Participation in para sport also has positive effects on brain health and social inclusion. Evidence supports a sense of increased confidence, independence, acceptance, and quality of life. Sport can assist people with disabilities adapt to their disability.<sup>18</sup> A study including elite para athletes showed that as many as 97 percent of athletes were employed<sup>19</sup> – a rate much higher than in the general population of people with disabilities. For brain health, physical activity may improve cognition and reduce the rates of depressive symptoms in individuals with neurological injuries such as stroke or multiple sclerosis.<sup>20</sup>

The combination of para sport's health benefits have the potential to improve all health-related domains (body function and structure, activity, participation, personal factors, and environmental factors) as described by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). Despite these benefits, ongoing barriers for inclusion of all athletes in sport still lead to reduced rates of para sport participation. Given the global prevalence of disability, this should be considered a critical public health and health equity concern.

## Solutions to promote health through para sport

Full health equity can only be achieved when individuals have the opportunity to attain their full health potential and are not held to a disadvantage based on predetermined circumstances such as a disability. It is critical that the SEM community work actively towards achieving health equity through physical activity and sports; such a mission is in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all, including people with disabilities. To achieve this, more opportunities for people with disabilities are needed within healthcare, the education sector and sports organizations. Some potential solutions to promote health through para sport include:

- Prioritize research that focuses on athletes with disabilities. Studies on the health benefits of physical activity and sports participation in this population have been marginalized,<sup>21</sup> with many of the existing exercise recommendations based on consensus rather than actual evidence.

- Educate healthcare professionals, physical education teachers, sports administrators, and coaches about para sport, including how to train individuals with a disability, and the associated health benefits of para sports.
- Inform policymakers and advocates about the health benefits of para sport as well as ongoing barriers to participation that might be addressed through legislative solutions (for example, required inclusion of students with disabilities in school-based sports).
- Ensure that para athletes have the same financial support as athletes with no disability, providing equitable opportunities to participate in recreational and competitive sport.

Improving health equity for people with disabilities through physical activity and sport has the potential to enhance health among the 15 percent of people living with disabilities. This should be an urgent global health priority. The time to act is now!



## **PART 2: ADVANCING SPORT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES: FROM GRASSROOTS TO ELITE**

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Sport, physical activity, recreation, and leisure are important for everyone, but perhaps more so for the approximately 15 percent of the world's population that experiences disability.<sup>22</sup> The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities clearly states that the benefits of sport participation are relevant at every level of participation.<sup>23</sup> This includes experiences from grassroots community-led clubs and school-based adaptive or inclusive sports opportunities, to high-performance events including the Deaflympics, Special Olympics, and Paralympic Games.

However, the number of individuals with disabilities benefiting from sport and recreation continues to lag compared to the general population. Several ongoing barriers preclude equitable participation. For example, while there are 206 International Olympic Committee members, there are only 184 National Paralympic Committee representatives. If athletes cannot compete on the world stage, how do we elevate the profile of adaptive sports locally?

Fortunately, recent global trends suggest that change is coming, and we are on the cusp of significant innovation that will enable more inclusive and equitable opportunities for sport participation for all. This article highlights movements to advance sport opportunities for people with disabilities. It also provides several ways the Sports and Exercise Medicine (SEM) community can engage to advance inclusion and accessibility.

### **Global efforts to address equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility**

We are amid a global movement to rectify and address issues related to equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility. As a result, disability sport may benefit from the same advances occurring in women's sport – in particular, an increased profile and more parity in financial rewards. While such rewards are still not equitable to those of male participants, these areas are improving. One example is the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games in the UK. These were the first multi-sport games to have equitable competitive opportunities for women and men, as well as five events for para sport that were full medal status.

Other developments such as the US Olympic Committee changing its name to the US Olympic & Paralympic Committee, the increased prevalence of Special Olympic Unified Sports opportunities across communities, and an increasingly closer working relationship between the International Olympic Committee and International Paralympic Committee are perhaps signs of greater inclusion to come.

## Marketing efforts targeting the disability community

Another trend is the increased recognition of the economic relevance of people with a disability. The late US Senator Ted Kennedy, a disability rights advocate, noted: “persons with disabilities present business and industry with unique opportunities in labor-force diversity and corporate culture, and they’re a large consumer market eager to know which businesses authentically support their goals and dreams.”<sup>24</sup> This understanding has grown in recent years. Global corporations such as Toyota, Procter & Gamble, and IKEA explicitly market to consumers with disabilities, which also increases their marketing appeal more broadly. This change is also noted in the recognition of people with disabilities as desirable employees. The COVID-19 pandemic led to an increased acceptability of working from home, which has greatly facilitated the inclusion of people with disabilities into the workforce.

## Media portrayal of athletes with disabilities

Images and stories presented in the media often influence public perceptions. Historically, athletes with disabilities are under-represented in the media, and when they are portrayed, they are often represented as “objects of pity, charity or medical treatment that have to overcome a tragic and disabling condition or conversely, presented as superheroes who have accomplished great feats, so as to inspire the non-disabled.”<sup>25</sup> Several recent initiatives have advanced the authentic and inclusive representation of people with disabilities in the media. For the Beijing 2022 Paralympic Winter Games, the UK Channel 4 was the first to have a presenting team composed entirely of people with disabilities. After broadcasting the London 2012 Paralympic Games, Channel 4 also developed a Disability Code of Portrayal, which provides guidelines on disability representation across all their platforms.<sup>26,27</sup>

## Recognizing unintended consequences

It is important to recognize that these promising global trends could also result in pitfalls and unintended negative consequences. Despite the increased focus on equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility across sectors, disability is often left behind. For example, Principle 6 of the Olympic Charter notes that “sport does not discriminate on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise.”<sup>28</sup> Disability would fall under the final category, but by not being named explicitly, does it risk being overlooked or undervalued in comparison?

Another unintended consequence of enhanced disability inclusion in sport is that only those with disabilities that are closest to the able-bodied perception of “normal” might truly benefit. For example, athletes with technologically impressive prosthetics or high-end sport wheelchairs are often showcased at the

expense of athletes with more significant disabilities whose bodies may be seen as less “acceptable” in the public eye. Finally, while technology can enable sport inclusion, if the broader market does not recognize its value, and companies do not find efficiencies for production of such technology, then the costs will remain prohibitively high and only the wealthy will benefit. This creates further disparities to sport participation for people with disabilities from low-income backgrounds.

## A call to action

Physical activity for people with disabilities is clearly important and is still arguably in its nascent stage of development. In this context, the SEM community has an important role to play in ensuring that people with disabilities have opportunities to engage in physical activity and sport for health. Box 1 presents ways that all SEM professionals can contribute to this global movement. We encourage everyone to get involved: through strong leadership, collaboration, and advocacy, we are confident that the SEM community can catalyze important opportunities for positive change.

### **Box 1: A call to action: How SEM professionals can contribute to disability inclusion in physical activity and sport**

- Include people with disabilities in your research or clinical team to ensure that the disability lived experience is recognized in all aspects of your work.
- If you are a researcher, ensure that your study design is inclusive of people with disabilities. This should include considerations for participant recruitment, outcome measure selection, data analysis, and dissemination.
- If you are a clinician, learn about the unique medical conditions that commonly have an impact on athletes with disabilities and how these may intersect with common sports-related injury and illness.
- Consider disability accessibility in your workplace through the lens of universal design. This should include structural considerations (e.g. ramps, elevators) and also digital accessibility.
- If you see injustice or inequitable treatment of people with disabilities, be an ally and speak up.

## PART 3: INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY IN SPORT – RIGHTS AND CHALLENGES IN QATAR

Sanaa AlHarahsheh, Kamilla Swart, Josélia Neves, Sabika Shaban

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Sport is considered a powerful tool to foster social inclusion and improve the wellbeing of people with disabilities (PWDs). While sport can place people on equitable social footing,<sup>29</sup> PWDs remain under-represented in sport and physical activities compared to their peers without disabilities.

The participation of PWDs in sport is influenced by the type and severity of disability. Those with learning disabilities or with profound and multiple disabilities have the lowest participation levels.<sup>30</sup> Globally, disability rates are rising dramatically, presently estimated at more than 1 billion people – including 190 million people (3.8 percent) who experience significant difficulties in functioning.<sup>31</sup> In Qatar, census data estimates that 1.2 percent of the population have a disability, with 232 athletes registered at the Qatar Paralympic Committee (QPC).<sup>32</sup> However, it is important to note that defining disability remains a challenge, despite significant progress in measurement. Qatar has around 1.3 million employees – mostly young, healthy men – and uses a narrow definition of disability when estimating the number of PWDs. Therefore, the Washington Group question sets should be adopted to measure PWDs more accurately.<sup>33</sup>

Over the past few decades, Qatar has achieved tangible progress in catering to the needs of PWDs. The Ministry of Youth and Sports underscores the importance of sport to promote social inclusion and cohesion. Furthermore, the QPC is committed to enabling para-athletes to achieve sporting excellence, and also to developing sport opportunities for all PWDs in Qatar (beginner to elite).<sup>34</sup> This section examines how sport and physical activities affect PWDs in Qatar, and the obstacles to their participation.

### Disability rights: Inclusion and sport

As a form of social engagement, sport participation is a fundamental human right supported by many international and national policies, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the 2006 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), UNESCO's Kazan Action Plan, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Qatar Law No. 2 of 2004 in Respect of People with Special Needs, and the 2019 Doha Declaration (See Table 1). Qatar, like every state, has an obligation to take proactive and appropriate measures to ensure that PWDs participate in all aspects of society on an equitable basis. The rights of PWDs were also emphasized in the Qatar National Vision 2030, and in the first (2011–2016) and second (2018–2022) Qatar National Development Strategy. Although Qatar has taken important steps to promote and protect the rights of PWDs, challenges continue to persist, and PWDs remain under-represented in all forms of cultural life, including sport.

**Table 1. A summary of the international and national policies that address the rights and needs of people with disabilities (PWDs)**

International and national policies for PWDs	Overview
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)	Disability rights are established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Sport, physical activity and play are identified implicitly in the Universal Declaration, providing support for the increasingly well-recognized right to participate in sport and physical activity.
The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006)	As stipulated in Article 30 of the UNCRPD (2006), signatories "...recognize the right of persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in cultural life" (defined as recreation, leisure, the arts, sport, and tourism). The article highlights the importance of treating people with disabilities equally, and says that states should improve access to and support the inclusion of PWDs in recreational, leisure, and sporting activities (Article 4).
UNESCO's Kazan Action Plan	The Action Plan states that, to reduce inequalities at national and international levels, inclusive sport policies are necessary. Therefore, physical education, physical activity, and sport should be at the core of all national and international sport policies.
The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development	The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes sport as an important enabler for sustainable development and peace, and a vital tool for youth, women, and communities to reach health, education, and social inclusion objectives.

<p>Qatar Law No. 2 of 2004 in Respect of People with Special Needs</p>	<p>Qatar Law No. 2 of 2004 establishes a comprehensive legal framework for PWDs, including 14 articles that ensure their care and legal protection, so they can exercise their rights equally with everyone else. In 2008, Qatar ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and in April 2015 it adopted a law on persons with disabilities, which covered the rights contained in the Convention, and established the National Committee with representatives of persons with disabilities whose mandate was to monitor compliance with the Convention.</p>
<p>The 2019 Doha Declaration</p>	<p>The movement toward inclusion in Qatar has gained new impetus with the formal commitment to enact the 2019 Doha Declaration, “a core reference point internationally for policy development about human rights and sustainable development in the context of disability.” This Declaration was the landmark outcome of the Doha International Conference on Disability and Development, held on 7–8 December 2019, under the guidance and patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation and its affiliated civil society centers. This Declaration, that sets out 11 recommendations to make Qatar (and other countries who may come to commit to it) actively adjusted to the needs of PWDs, is an incentive to all those who are already on the ground working toward making Qatar a more welcoming and inclusive country.</p>

## Disability and sport

In this editorial, the term 'disability sport' is used to refer to all sport, physical activity, recreation, and leisure for and involving PWDs, including adaptive sport or parasport.<sup>35</sup> Adapted physical activity can be placed on par with mainstream modalities and is found in different application areas, such as inclusive and specialized physical education, competitive sport, and recreational physical activity.

## Adapted modalities

The Qatar Paralympic Committee is responsible for managing participation at the Paralympic Games and other international competitions, as well as for providing opportunities for PWDs in Qatar to participate in sport at all levels. The Paralympics is an international sporting event in which para-athletes compete in six disability groups (amputee, cerebral palsy, visual impairment, spinal cord injuries, intellectual disability, and "les autres" – any disability that does not fall into any of the other categories). The Paralympic movement recognizes ten impairment types, and para-athletes are divided further into classes depending on the type and extent of their disabilities.<sup>36</sup>

The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) serves as an umbrella organization that represents all sports with disability. It supports 200-plus members, including 182 national Paralympic committees (of which QPC is one), four Paralympic sport federations (boccia, sitting volleyball, wheelchair basketball, and wheelchair rugby), and four international organizations of sport for disability that focus on grassroots sport development: CP-ISRA (cerebral palsy), IBSA (vision impairment), IWAS (wheelchair and amputee), and Virtus (intellectual impairment), among others.

## Benefits of sport

The benefits of sport are universal for all, including those with disabilities. Through sport, PWDs can advance social inclusion, health, and life skills.<sup>37</sup> Sport fosters social and psychological wellbeing by providing opportunities for friendship, a sense of self, and meaning and purpose in life. It positively affects the way PWDs perceive their bodies, leading to better mood states, less stress, and increased self-esteem. It develops social belonging, improved communication, and better coping with the stigma associated with the disability.<sup>38</sup> Despite these universal benefits, PWDs still face various barriers to participating in sport and other physical activities.

## Challenges and constraints

Factors that hinder sport participation by PWDs can be summarized in three main categories:<sup>39</sup>

- **Intrapersonal constraints** involve psychological conditions that are internal to the individual (such as personality, attitudes, mood, stress, and perceived self-skill).
- **Interpersonal constraints** arise from interactions with other members of society.
- **Structural constraints** include factors such as the lack of opportunities and accessibility or the cost of activities that result from external conditions in the environment.

Additionally, the global COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant influence on sport and physical activity, leading to the closure of sport and physiotherapy facilities and spaces. It has also resulted in the unprecedented delay of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and the cancellation of athletic activities at every level, directly limiting the social opportunities and advantages of global, regional, and local sporting events for PWDs.<sup>40</sup>

In Qatar, it is difficult to produce evidence-based policies due to the lack of adequate data on disabilities. Pockets of data gathered by scattered entities, combined with dated or scant figures from previous censuses, have led to the disability community's failure to receive due support, whether at the local or global level.<sup>41</sup>

Recognizing these barriers and challenges creates a clear opportunity to effect change. Qatar has progressed through several formative stages and is currently ripe with prospects for advancing inclusivity. Moving forward, evidence should be generated to better describe the current state of disability and inclusion in sport within Qatar. National and international organizations must also work together to increase the opportunities and access of PWDs to sporting activities. Governments have an important role to play in supporting such initiatives, increasing funding, and promoting awareness for the importance of PWD participation in sport.



## PART 4: BEST PRACTICES AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM QATAR

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The upcoming FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ (FWC22) has been announced as the most accessible for people with disabilities (PWD) in the history of international tournaments.<sup>42</sup> This will have a positive impact on the built environment and the lives of local communities. Such a major sporting event will also galvanize the population to undertake greater physical activity, and fight obesity in the country. The commitment to a healthier population led to the establishment of National Sports Day, the only public holiday beyond Qatar National Day.

It is now acknowledged that all people have the need and the right to engage in sport, and that PWDs are entitled to adaptations to access sport on equitable terms. Regrettably, there is no centralized data on the participation of PWDs in sport at the national level. The data gathered by various organizations makes comparisons and generalizations impossible. This section offers a brief overview of PWD engagement with sports in Qatar.

### Physical therapy and education in Qatar

In the case of children with disabilities (CWD), early intervention will be the gateway to physical activity, and physical therapy is individualized to develop the child at multiple levels. For instance, psychomotor therapy will combine emotional, physical, and cognitive development; and play therapy may meet sensory, physical, or behavioral challenges. The services listed in the Qatar Educational Directory<sup>43</sup> show how physical therapies are integral to special education offered at high-quality state and independent schools, among which are the Al-Shafallah Center for Persons with Disabilities, Renad Academy, and Al Noor Institute. Children attending inclusive (mainstream) education are offered adapted physical education.

Despite efforts to provide physical education to CWDs, there are few options for recreational activity. PWDs are less likely to travel, play non-competitive games, or simply share outdoor spaces<sup>44</sup> which afford physical activity that would enhance physical, emotional, and social wellbeing.<sup>45</sup> In 2017, Qatar gained its first accessible playground in Al Legtaifiya Family Public Park. Qatar's first accessible swimming program was established in 2012, and later hosted by Aspire Academy in 2016. The American School of Doha organizes a Challenger Division within its Little League divisions to encourage CWDs to engage in baseball, with the help of student "buddies". The Deaf Cricket Sports Centre in Doha trains players to compete internationally, while Qatar Foundation has the Ability Friendly Sports Program<sup>46</sup> offering unique sport experiences (see Box 2). However, these opportunities remain inaccessible to the population for reasons such as cost, logistics, language, gender, disability, and/or citizenship.

## Box 2: Qatar Foundation's Ability Friendly Sports Program

The Ability Friendly Sports Program was launched officially by Qatar Foundation in 2019 to support people with autism, learning disabilities, hearing disabilities, visual impairments, and physical disabilities to take part in sports and developmental activities. The program offers football and swimming classes, as well as seasonal camps that are tailored to each participant's needs. The program is open to participants aged three years and older. The idea for the program was initially inspired by the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) 2016 report *Autism: A Global Framework for Action*. This report contributed to Qatar Foundation's own policies surrounding inclusion and ability-friendly programs, which ultimately led to the implementation of similar initiatives across Qatar.

Since delivering its first class in 2018, the program has played an undeniable role in improving the quality of life for children on the autism spectrum by filling a critical need for sports-based programs. Aside from capturing the attention of families with children with autism, the sports program also attracted strong interest from families with children of other abilities. Currently the program incorporates swimming and football lessons that are adapted to children of all abilities and ages. Between 2019 and 2022, 1,175 people with disabilities have participated in the program's sport activities (731 in swimming and 444 in football). About 75 percent of participants are male (880), with ages ranging from three to 36 years. The majority of participants have autism (863). Also, there are 140 students with learning disabilities, 120 with physical disabilities, 49 with Down syndrome, 14 with hearing impairments, and eight with visual impairments. Since its inception, the program has delivered 16,550 sessions.<sup>47</sup>

To further support the program's growth and dissemination across Qatar and beyond, in collaboration with the College of Humanities & Social Sciences, Hamad Bin Khalifa University, the Ability Friendly Sports Program launched a Coaching the Coach Training Program, providing "theoretical and practical participant-centered learning, to develop the required competencies for coaching children with disabilities."<sup>48</sup>

## Competitive (elite/professional) parasport

Competitive parasport follows the Olympic motto “faster, higher, stronger.” For PWDs, comparability and classification derive from the athletes’ profiles, the modality, and environmental adaptations. Parasport includes adapted versions of mainstream sport for non-disabled practitioners and modalities specifically for PWDs. The Qatar Olympic Committee works with national sports federations and the Qatar Paralympic Committee to promote inclusivity through sport, encouraging participation in national and international events. The Qatar Paralympic Committee has developed sport-specific frameworks providing adequate infrastructure and support, such as trained and qualified coaches, rehabilitative services, sports medicine, transport, equipment accessibility, and communications.<sup>49</sup>

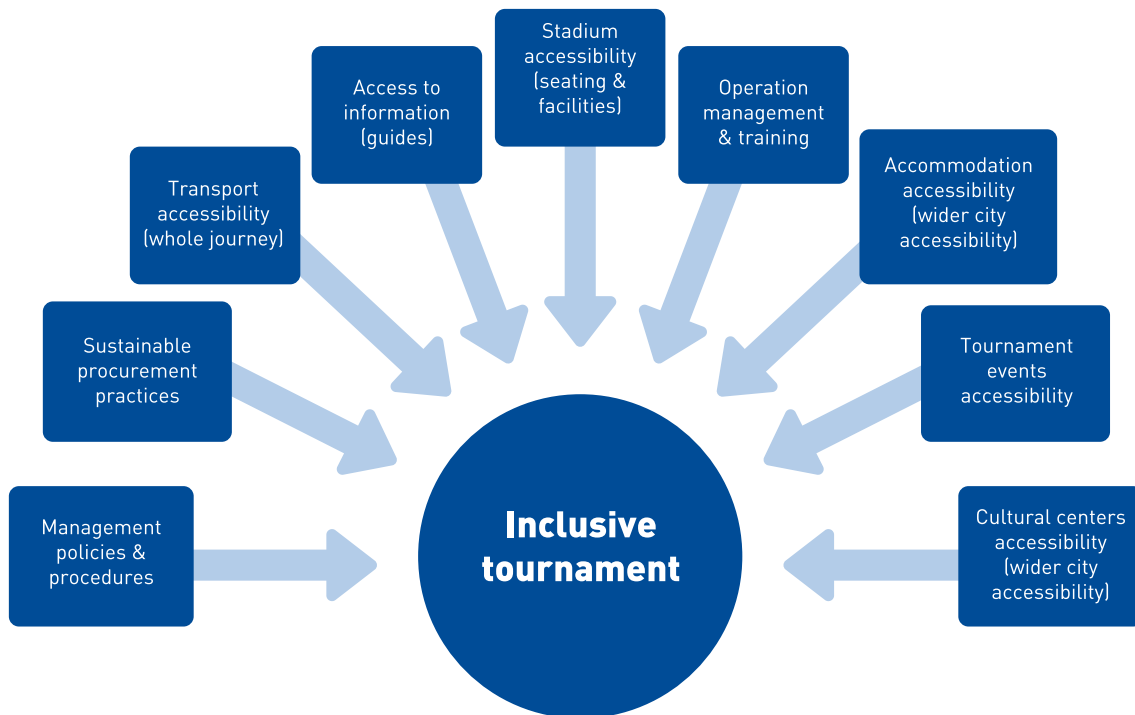
### Box 3: Qatar’s achievements in the Paralympic Games

Qatar made its debut at the 1996 Paralympic Games and has participated in every edition since then, with the first women participating in 2016. Twelve Qatari Paralympians also competed in the 2014 Asian Para Games in Incheon, South Korea, where Qatar won five medals (three gold, two bronze). As a measure of its strong commitment for sports for people with disabilities, Qatar hosted the 2015 IPC Athletics World Championships.<sup>50</sup> Qatar won its first medals in the 2016 Games (men’s and women’s shot put) as well as a bronze medal at the Tokyo 2020 Games (men’s shot put). At the London 2017 IPC Athletics World Championships, Team Qatar won its first gold medal and the first medal for women (silver) at the World Championships.

## FIFA Arab Cup 2021™ and FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022™ contributions to social change

Sport brings people together to compete and collaborate. The mega sport events Qatar is hosting has leveraged significant social change in the country. The Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy (SC) has been entrusted with “overseeing the planning and development of host country operations.”<sup>51</sup> In its vision, the SC commits to inclusivity by operationalizing multiple areas (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Inclusivity and accessibility areas**



Source: Supreme Committee for Delivery & Legacy

In 2016 the SC established the Accessibility Forum, bringing together PWDs, experts and stakeholders to advise the SC and its stakeholders, review plans, provide experiential advice, and issue recommendations to relevant technical teams and partners. In 2018, a delegation of 15 Accessibility Forum members traveled to Moscow to assess the fan experience from arrival to departure to make recommendations for the Qatar tournament.

In December 2021, the FIFA Arab Cup tested the country's preparedness to welcome fans of all abilities. Basic accessibility infrastructures and services are now guaranteed, and the country is ready for FWC22. All stadiums and precincts have been checked for access; several stadiums (Education City, Khalifa International and Al Janoub) have sensory viewing rooms for fans with sensory requirements; audio descriptive commentaries in Arabic and English are offered to fans with vision impairment; and volunteers and staff, some with disabilities themselves, have attended specific training to support fans with specific needs.

## Conclusion and recommendations

The purpose of sport inclusion is to improve the quality of life for PWDs, and to stimulate social interaction. To support the health, wellbeing, and inclusion of PWDs through sport, Qatar should address: policies; financial investment and support; strategic planning; research, data collection, monitoring, and evaluation systems; qualification and training of providers; improvement of infrastructures; development of anti-stigma and awareness programs; and the involvement of PWDs in the creation of sports initiatives.

Only multidisciplinary, transversal, and collaborative effort will lead to the leveraging of a truly healthy and inclusive society, whose wellbeing is anchored in physical activity and sport.

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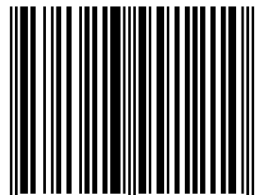
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