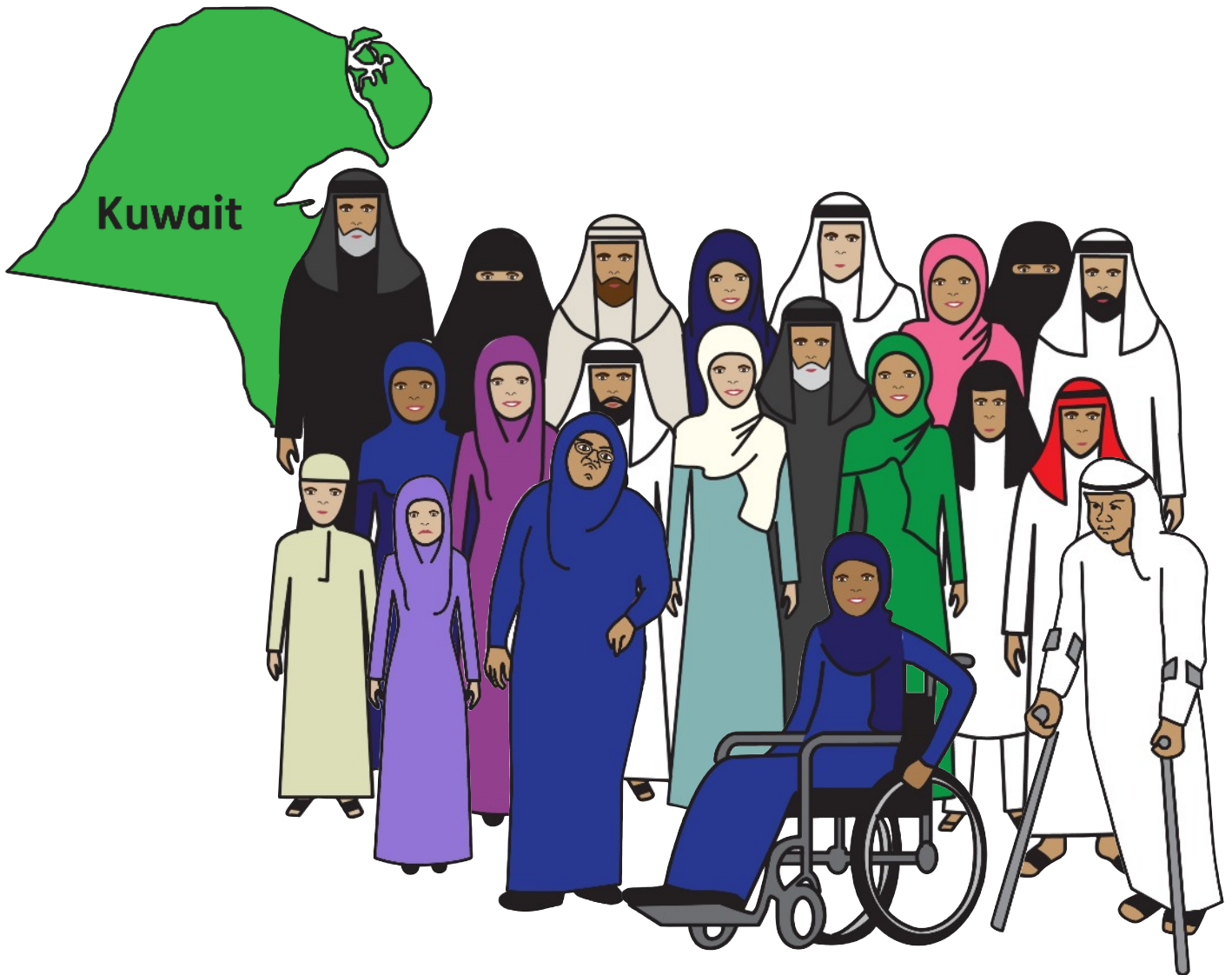




# The rights of people with disabilities around the world.



## What is happening in Kuwait?



EasyRead version of:

Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on her visit to Kuwait (A/HRC/43/41/Add.1).



1. About this report

**1**



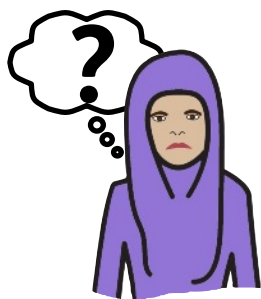
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57



Hard words are in **bold**. These words are explained in a list at the end of this report.

# 1. About this report



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1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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Every year the **Special Rapporteur** on the rights of persons with disabilities writes reports to tell the **United Nations** about **human rights** and people with disabilities.



The Special Rapporteur is Catalina Devandas. She helps countries understand how to make sure people with disabilities can get their human rights.



The United Nations is a group made up of 193 countries. They work together to make the world a safer and better place for everyone.



This is an Easy Read version of the report about her visit to Kuwait at the end of November 2018.



The government invited the Special Rapporteur to visit their country. She met Ministers, government officials, people with disabilities and their organisations.



She visited hospitals, schools and services that support people with disabilities. She also met the United Nations team in Kuwait.



The Special Rapporteur says thank you to everyone who helped her understand what life is like for people with disabilities in Kuwait.



## 2. About Kuwait

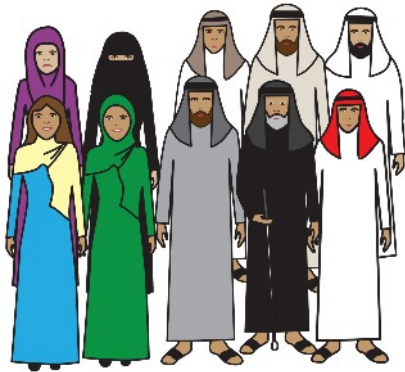


### What is Kuwait like?

The State of Kuwait is a country in the Middle East.



Kuwait is one of the world's largest sellers of oil. It is one of the richest countries in the world.



Just over 4 and a half million people live there. 6 out of 10 people in Kuwait are men.



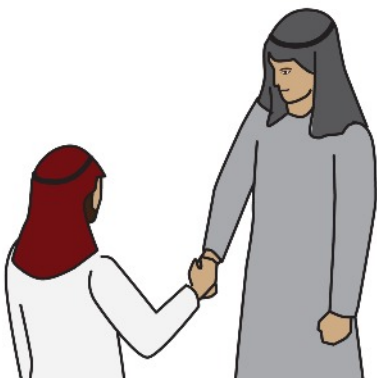
7 out of 10 people who live in Kuwait are workers who come from other countries.



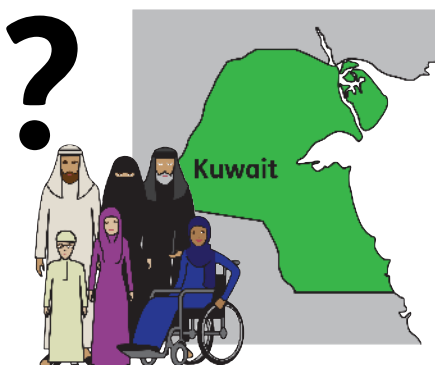
In 2013 the Government signed an international agreement called the United Nations Disability **Convention**. It says that people with disabilities have the same human rights as everyone else.



This means the Government must make sure people with disabilities get their human rights in Kuwait.

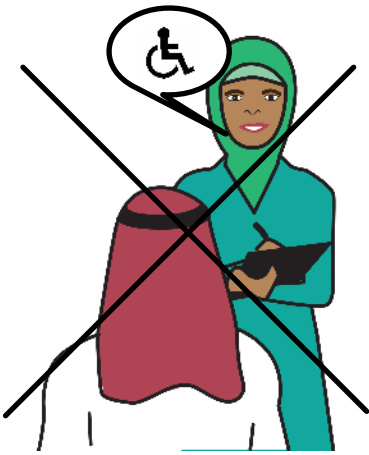


Everyone has human rights. Human rights mean you must be treated fairly, equally and with respect.



**How many people with disabilities live there?**

The Government does not know how many people with disabilities live in Kuwait.

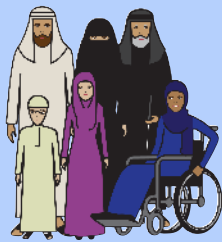


They do not ask about disability when they collect information about people.



This makes it difficult to find out what life is like for them.

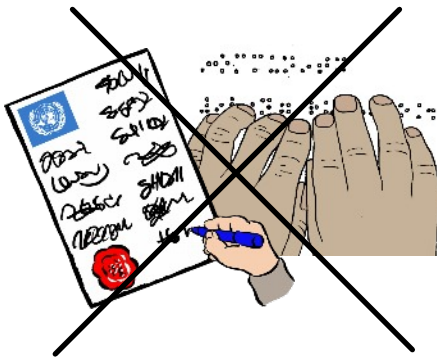




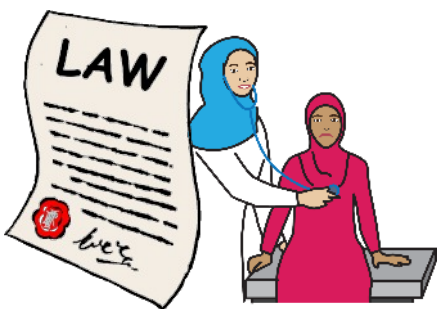
### 3. People with disabilities in Kuwait



Kuwait signed the Disability Convention and other human rights agreements.



But the government has not signed the agreement to make printed information **accessible** for blind people.



One main law gives people with disabilities protection in Kuwait:

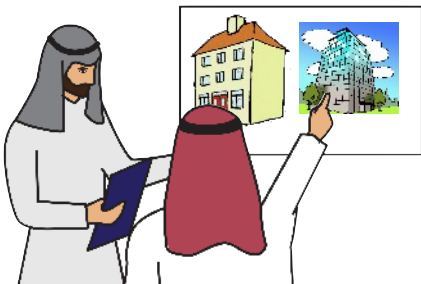
It says that people with disabilities have the same right as everyone else to have good health, job, education and **social protection**.



But the law does not do everything it should. For example, it does not cover the right of people with disabilities to:



- vote



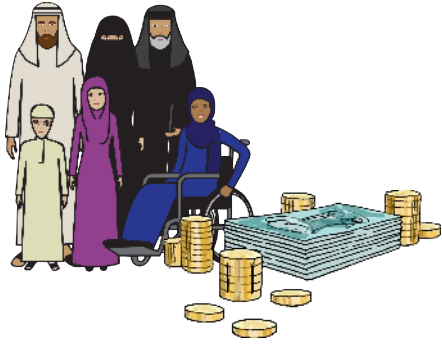
- have **legal capacity**



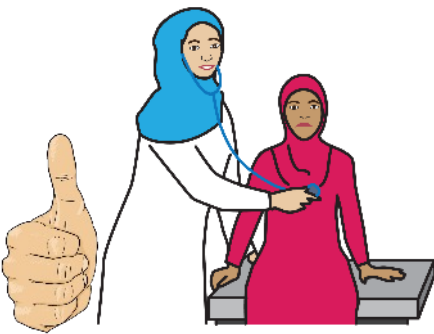
- not to have their freedom taken away.



Some laws use insulting words to talk about people with disabilities.

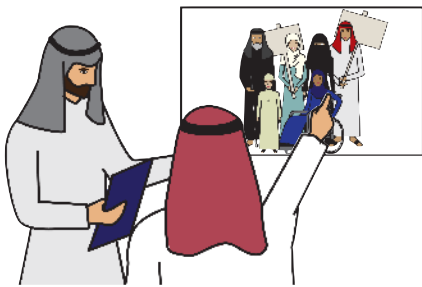


The Special Rapporteur is pleased the government plans to spend money to make sure people with disabilities are fully included in society by 2035.



The Government will do this by:

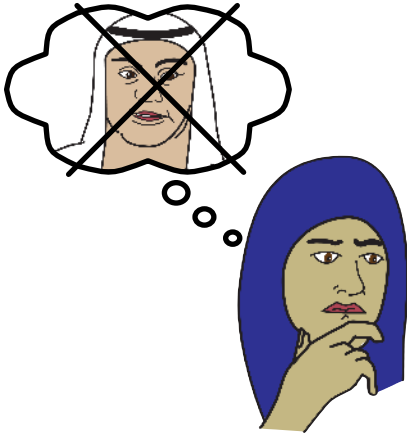
- giving better healthcare and finding out earlier if someone has a disability



- helping people with disabilities understand their rights



- supporting people with disabilities to be more involved in society



- getting rid of **stereotypes**, especially about people with learning disabilities



- making sure more people with disabilities have a good education and the chance to work



- making sure plans for transport and buildings make them accessible to people with disabilities



- supporting public and private organisations to work together to include people with disabilities.

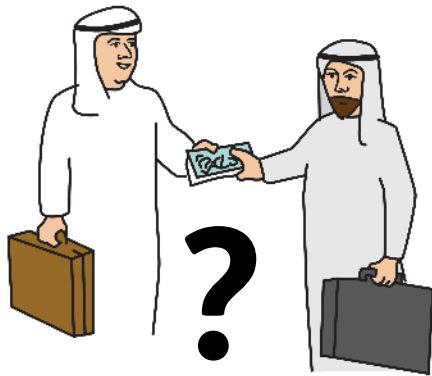


The Special Rapporteur thinks this is a good plan.

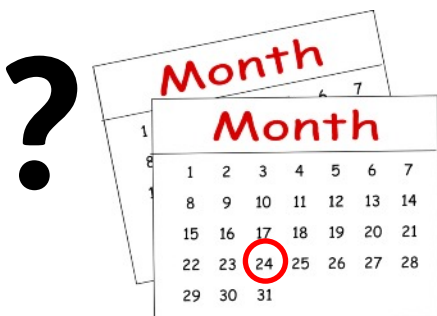


But the government should say:

- who will do things



- who will pay for them



- when they must be done by.



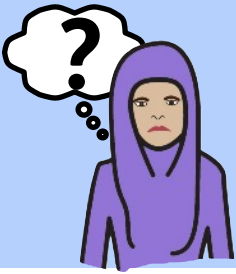
The Public Authority for Disabled Affairs is a government office that takes care of people with disabilities in Kuwait. It makes sure the government thinks about people with disabilities in all their plans.



The Special Rapporteur thinks this is important. The Authority should also work with organisations of people with disabilities to make sure they are not left out.



The Special Rapporteur says Kuwait needs an independent organisation to check how the government uses the Disability Convention. This should include people with disabilities.

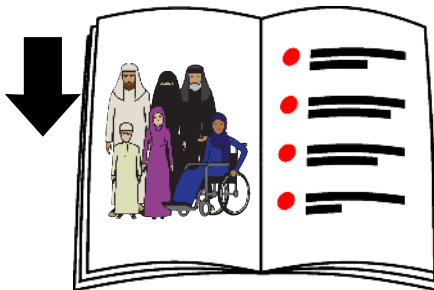
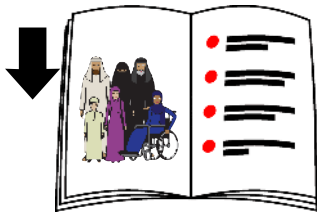


## 4. What makes things difficult?

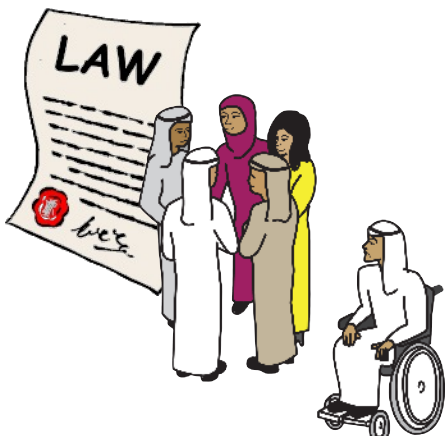


### Not having information about people with disabilities

The Special Rapporteur found the government in Kuwait does not have enough information about people with disabilities to plan laws and services for them.

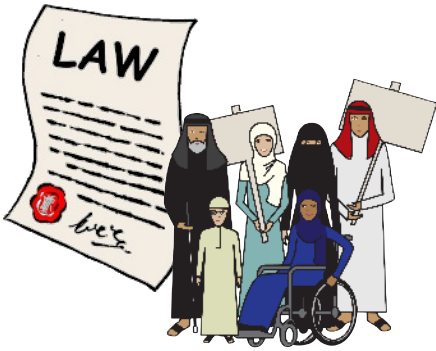


There is very little information about Kuwaitis and people with disabilities from other countries who live there.



### What many people in Kuwait believe about people with disabilities

The law on disability does not say it is wrong to **discriminate** against someone because of their disability.



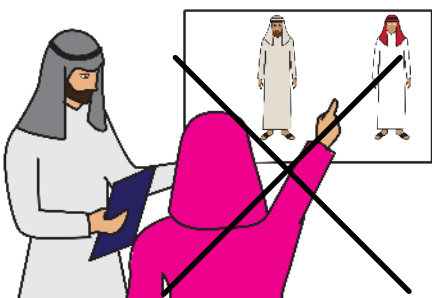
But the law does say the government must help the public, people with disabilities and their families understand their rights.



Religious leaders are also helping people understand about the rights of people with disabilities.

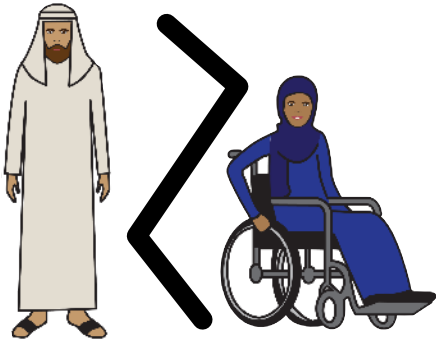


But many children and adults with disabilities are still kept hidden at home and away from other people.



Many women and girls with disabilities do not have the right to choose who they marry, get an education or have a job.





People also told the Special Rapporteur that some husbands divorce their wives if the woman becomes disabled.



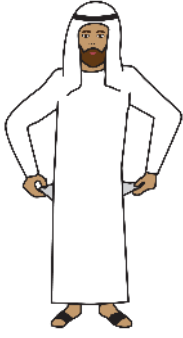
The Special Rapporteur found that laws and services in Kuwait treat people with disabilities as if they are ill and need care.



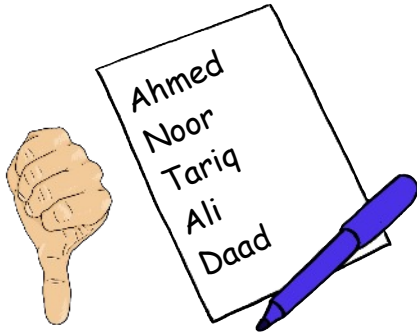
This makes it difficult to plan how they can make their own decisions or work to support themselves.



The law also discriminates against people with disabilities who do not have Kuwaiti passports.



Particularly **Bidoon** people who are some of the poorest in the country.



It is very difficult for them to **register** to get the services they need.



## Accessibility

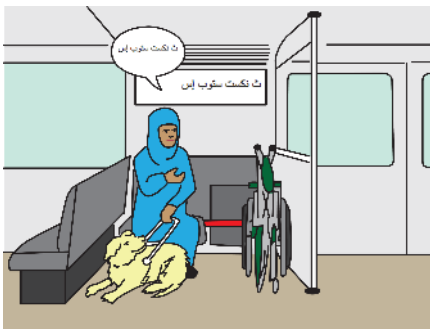
In 2017 the government agreed rules for designing buildings so people with disabilities can use them.



There are parking spaces for people with disabilities at government buildings, shopping centres and business centres.



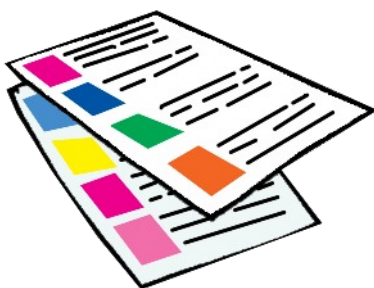
The Special Rapporteur is pleased with this but thinks the changes are mostly for people with physical disabilities.



The government needs to do much more to make buildings and transport accessible to people who are blind, deaf or have a learning disability or mental health problems.



Including in the poorer parts of the country where many people who do not have Kuwaiti passports live.



The Special Rapporteur thinks the government is working to make information more accessible with:

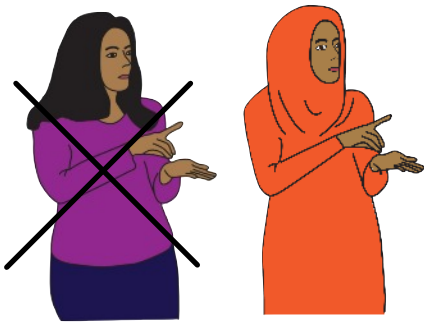
- information for people with learning disabilities



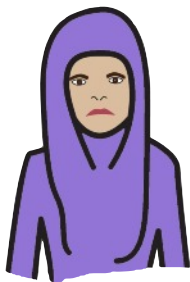
- **audio description** for the main television series



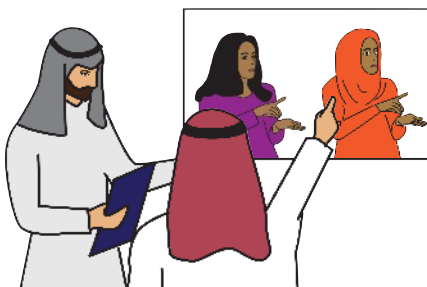
- **sign language interpreters** for the evening news, events, conferences and in emergencies.



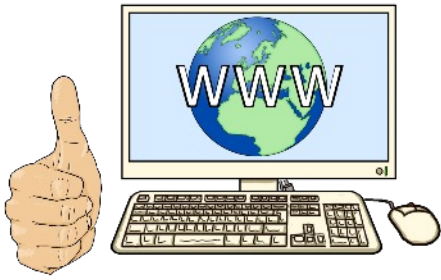
But the government uses Arabic **sign language** and not Kuwaiti sign language.



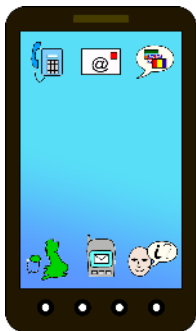
Many deaf people are unhappy about this.



The Disability Convention says deaf people should choose which sign language they use.



The Special Rapporteur can see the government is working to make websites more accessible.



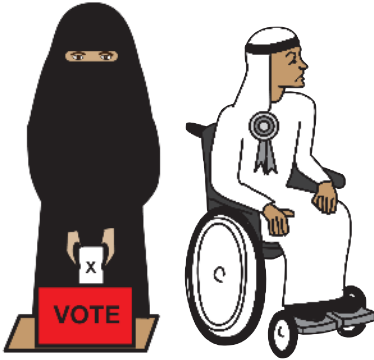
But not enough services or people with disabilities know about easy and low cost ways to use **technology** to communicate.



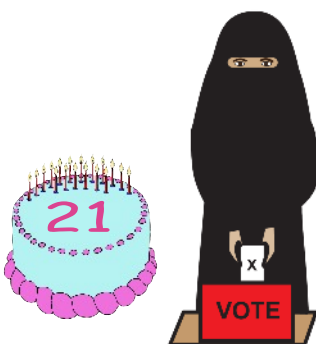
## 5. Human rights and people with disabilities

### Being involved in politics

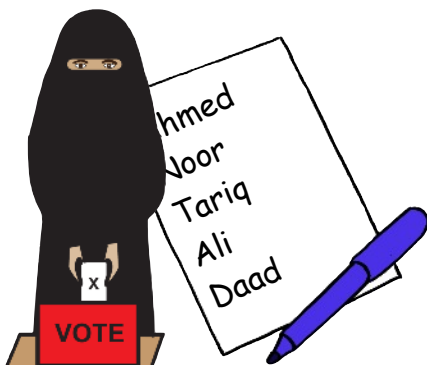
Politics means being involved in the way a country is governed. For example, voting or being part of local or national government.



The Disability Convention says people with disabilities can take part in local or national government and in decisions that affect everyone.



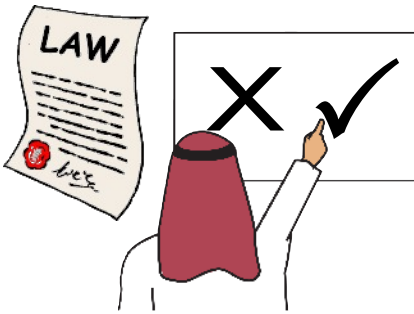
Kuwaiti citizens can **vote** when they are 21 years old.



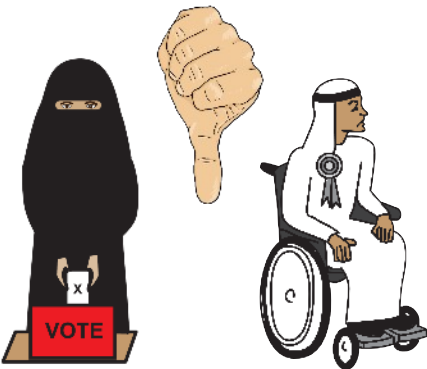
They have to register to vote.



Anyone over 30 years old who is registered can stand for **election** to be part of the government.



But the law says only people who can make decisions for themselves can vote.



The Special Rapporteur thinks this makes it difficult for some people with disabilities to vote or be involved in running the country. It is also difficult for many people with disabilities to get out to vote.

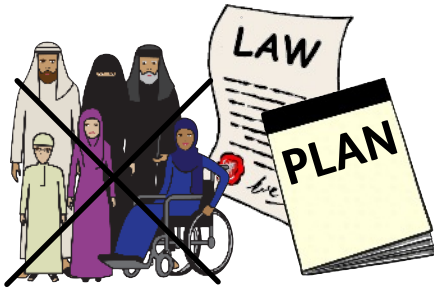


## Being involved in decisions

The Disability Convention says governments must find out what people with disabilities think about laws and plans that affect everyone.



The government in Kuwait has set up some groups to help people with disabilities get involved.



But the Special Rapporteur found people with disabilities are not really involved in laws and plans about disability or other rights.



She says people with disabilities and their organisations should also be involved in decisions that affect everyone in Kuwait.



The government must work with people with disabilities and not just people who provide services for them. This includes women, girls and young people with disabilities.





## Going to school or college

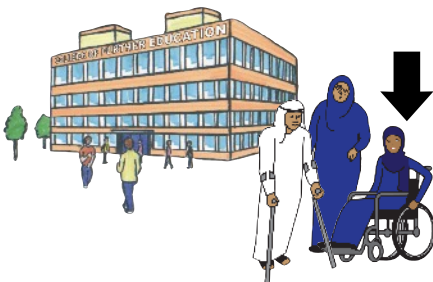
The law says Kuwaiti children and students with disabilities have the same chance as other people to go to school or college.



The law also says all Kuwaiti children must have free **primary schooling**.



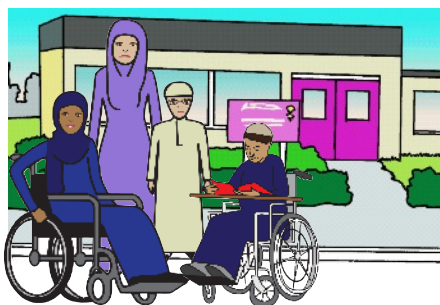
People with disabilities can go on to work training when they finish school.



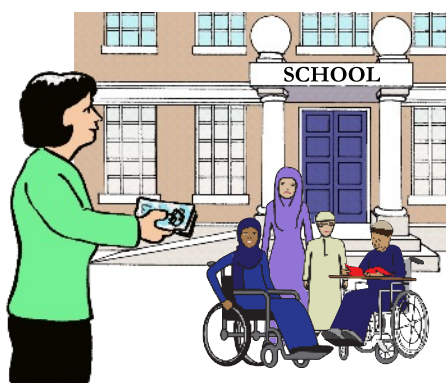
But very few go to college or university.



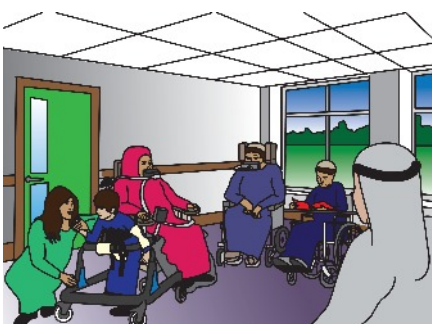
The Special Rapporteur is pleased that some things are getting better.



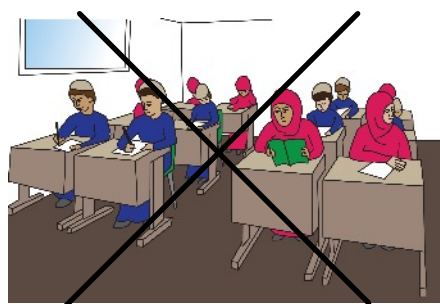
But she is worried that many children with disabilities still go to special schools away from other children.



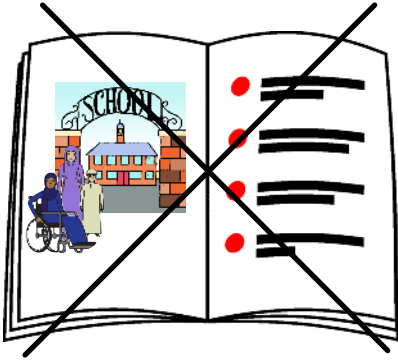
The government also pays for Kuwaiti children with disabilities to go to private schools.



But they learn in separate classes.



This stops the government working to include children with disabilities in public schools.



The government does not have good information about children who do not have Kuwaiti passports and who do not go to school.



The Special Rapporteur thinks many Bidoon children with disabilities are missing out because their parents cannot afford to pay the fees in private schools.

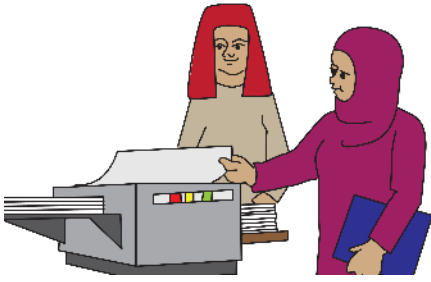


The Special Rapporteur thinks the government needs a plan to make sure public and private schools really include all children with disabilities.

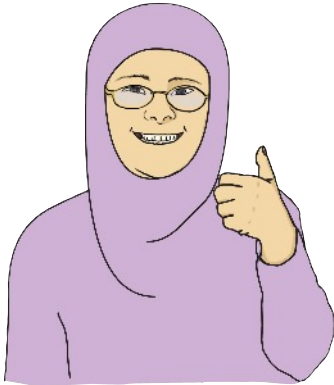


This means making sure schools have the right staff, equipment and training.

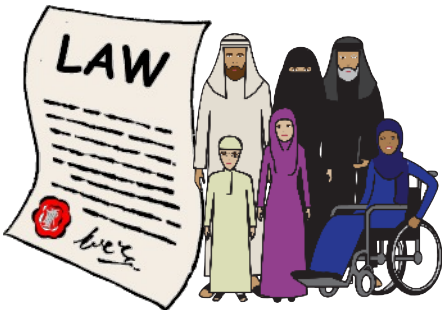
## Having a job



People with disabilities must not be treated worse than other people. They must have the same chance to work.



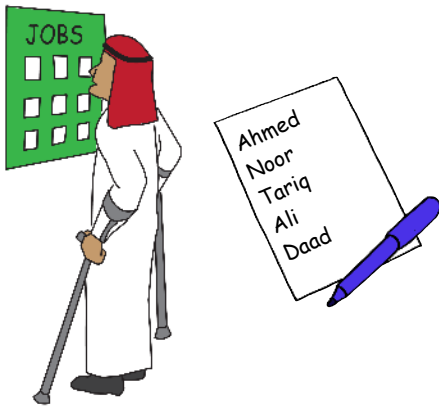
Work is an important way for people with disabilities to be included. It makes them feel better about themselves and shows other people what they can do.



The Government has laws to make sure public and private companies employ at least a set number of Kuwaiti people with disabilities.



They can act against companies that do not do this.



They also have a list of people with disabilities who are looking for work.



Employers must make changes to give people with disabilities the same chance as other people to work for them.



The Special Rapporteur thinks this is a good start.



But last year only 19 people with disabilities worked for private companies and only 283 worked for public companies.



This is because:

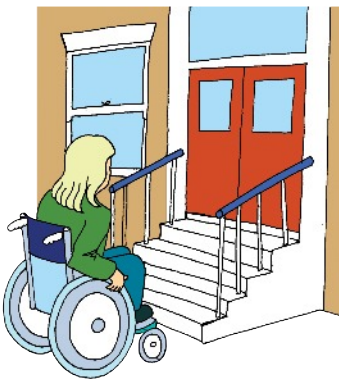
- other people still believe that people with disabilities need to be cared for and cannot work



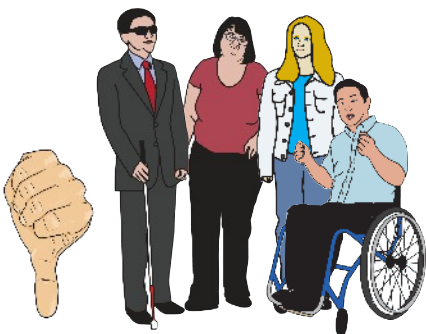
- people with disabilities worry they will lose their **disability pension** if they work



- people with disabilities cannot finish their education



- buildings and workplaces are not accessible.



Things are worse for people with disabilities who do not have Kuwaiti passports. The law does not protect them.



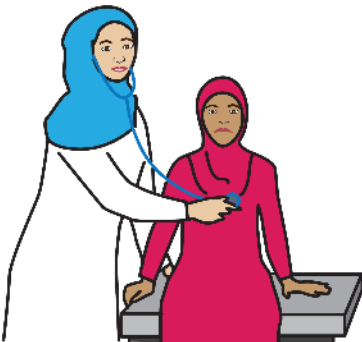
## Social protection

Social protection is things that give everyone the same chances in life.

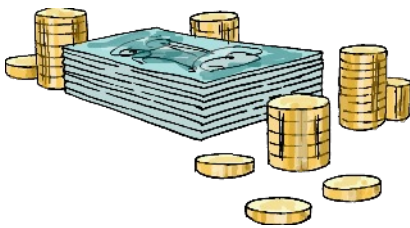


For example:

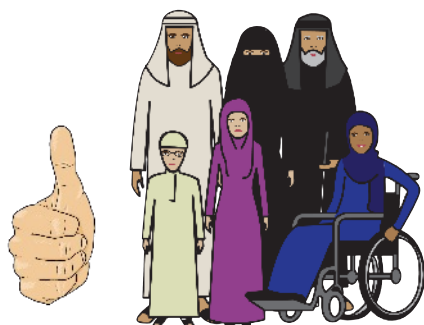
- having enough food



- basic healthcare



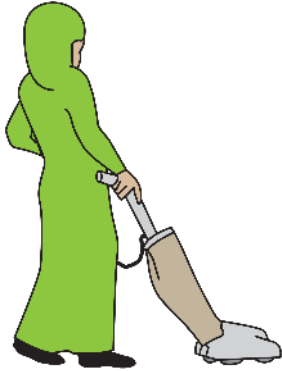
- money to help pay for things if you cannot work or earn enough.



There is very good social protection for Kuwaiti people with disabilities.



The law says people with disabilities should get **benefits**.



Benefits include money for:

- help with housework



- a driver



- housing



- people with disabilities who are under 21 years

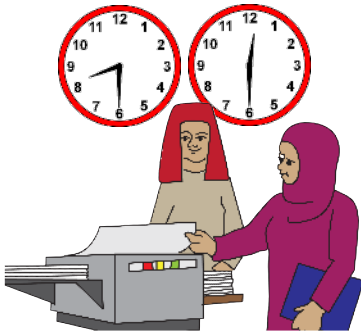




- a disability pension for people over 21 who cannot work because of their disability



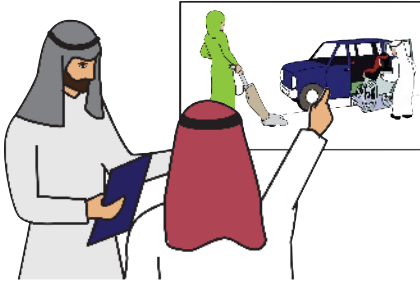
- women who care for someone with a disability.



People with disabilities who work and their families have other benefits like working less hours and extra vacations.



The Special Rapporteur says benefits are an important way to make sure people with disabilities have enough money.



Then they can decide what support they need and who to pay for it.



But benefits should also help people be included in their community.



But there are lots of problems with this system.



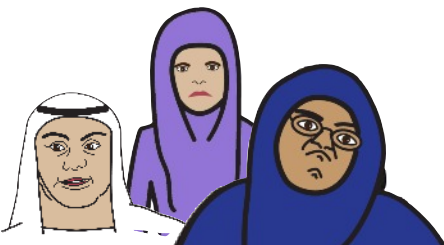
Many people have to go to court to prove they have a disability and get their benefits.



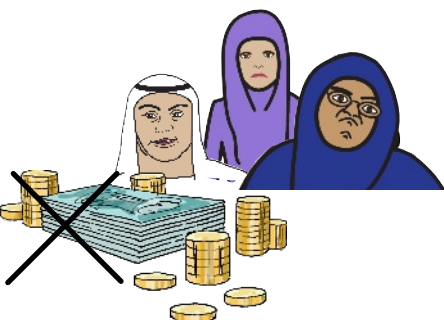
The government asked the Special Rapporteur how they can do it better.



The Special Rapporteur will help the government find a fairer way to decide who gets benefits.



She also wants them to look at what happens for people with mental health problems.



At the moment the law says this is not a disability, so they cannot get disability benefits.



The Special Rapporteur says this is discrimination.



It also means people treat them as if they are ill.



## **Living independently in the community**

People with disabilities should have support to live in the community. This includes adults and children who need lots of support because of their disability.



The law gives some Kuwaiti people with disabilities and their families the chance to get money to help rent, buy or build a home. But they have to meet certain rules.



The Special Rapporteur is worried that the law makes it easy to build large residential homes for children with disabilities to live away from the community.



When the Special Rapporteur visited Kuwait nearly 600 people with disabilities were living in places like this.



The Special Rapporteur thinks it is wrong for people with disabilities to be kept away from the community with no choice about where they live.



This is particularly bad for children who should live with their family or in the community.

The Special Rapporteur was shocked when she visited one large care centre in Kuwait where people with disabilities:



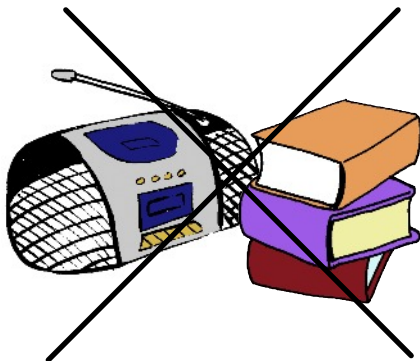
- wore uniforms



- were treated like they were ill



- slept in rooms that looked like hospital wards



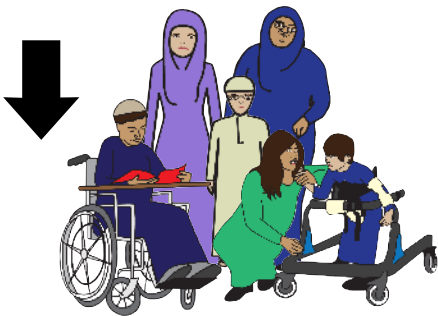
- did not have any of their own things



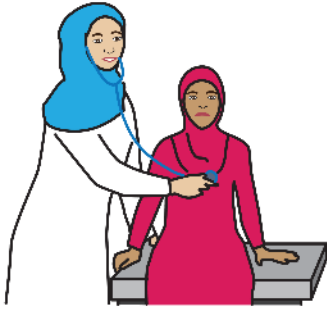
- were watched all the time



- shared smelly showers which had no privacy

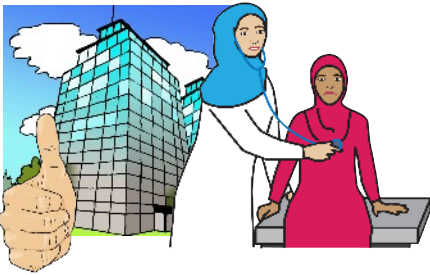


The Special Rapporteur can see that the government is working to make sure fewer people live in places like this. But the government could do more.



## Health

The Disability Convention says everyone has the right to good health.



There are good healthcare services and also special clinics and hospitals for Kuwaiti people with disabilities.

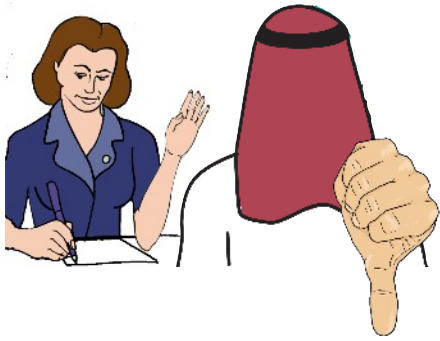


People are supported to get special treatment abroad if they cannot get it in Kuwait.



People with disabilities also have good access to **sexual** and **reproductive** health care.

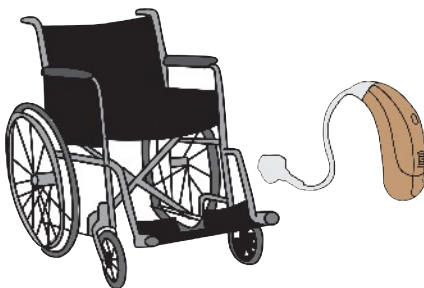




But people with disabilities who do not have Kuwaiti passports do not get such good health services.



They have to pay if they want good private healthcare. Many cannot afford this.



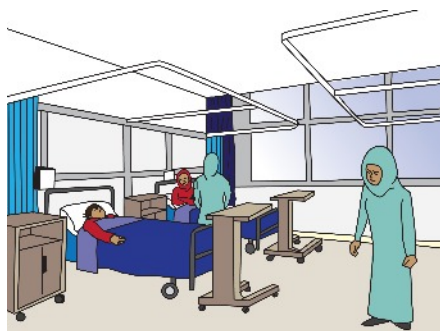
The government provides hearing aids and wheelchairs to people who need them.



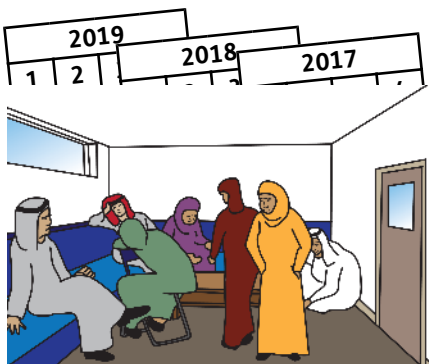
But the Special Rapporteur thinks they should tell people about other types of **assistive technology** that can help them stay healthy and independent.



The Special Rapporteur is pleased that the government is trying to support more people with mental health problems in the community.



But she was shocked to see how adults and children were treated when she visited a mental health hospital in Kuwait.

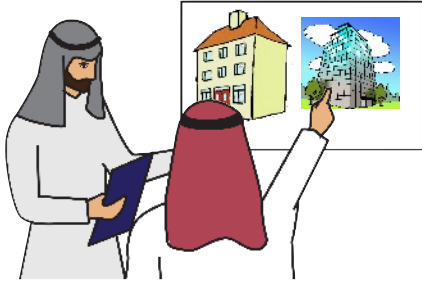


People were locked there for many years, in crowded rooms and did not have much to do.



Many were given strong medicines and other treatments because their families agreed they could have them.

## Legal capacity



**Legal capacity** is the right of anyone over 21 to make legal decisions and to have them respected.



The law in Kuwait allows someone to make decisions for people with severe disabilities.

For example, the law says:



- many people with disabilities need someone to act for them if the court thinks they cannot make decisions for themselves



- blind people need someone to **witness** when they sign for things, like opening a bank account



- if someone leaves money to a person who does not have legal capacity, the government must manage this for them.



The Special Rapporteur believes this is wrong. Because it takes away a person's right to make or be involved in their own decisions.



People are at risk of abuse because other people can make bad decisions for them. They are also more likely to be kept away from other people.



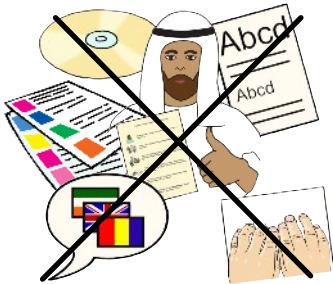
She said the government should get rid of laws on legal capacity that take away people's rights. They should follow the Disability Convention.



## Using the courts and justice system

The Disability Convention says people with disabilities have the same right as everyone else to go to the police and to court to complain.

But this is difficult in Kuwait because:



- although people with disabilities can get into most court buildings, they cannot get accessible information or understand what is happening in court



- people with disabilities do not get support to make a complaint



- the law says someone must act for the person if their disability means they cannot make decisions.

## Working with the United Nations and other countries



Kuwait gives a lot of help and money to other countries. This must include people with disabilities.



The government must make sure they only give money to projects that include and support the rights of people with disabilities.



The United Nations team in Kuwait should make sure all its plans link together to include people with disabilities. They should have people with disabilities working with them.



## 6. What happens next?



The government has done lots of things to help people with disabilities get their rights in Kuwait.



Now the government must make sure:

- they have good plans and laws for the future



- these plans are for everyone with a disability, not just for those with a Kuwaiti passport



- people with disabilities get more services close to where they live. These should include good support, healthcare, schools and jobs.

# Kuwait should work on these things

## 1. Better laws



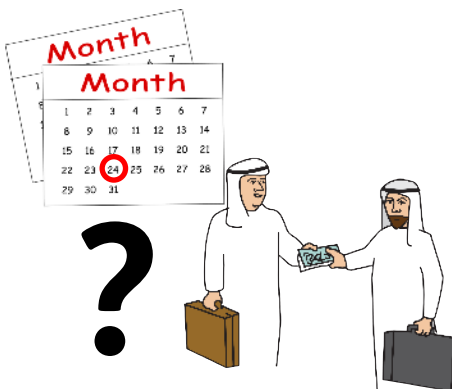
- sign up to other United Nations agreements that give people rights



- make sure the law says that people who do not have Kuwaiti passports can also get their rights



- get rid of plans and laws that take away legal capacity and stop people with disabilities doing the same things as everyone else in Kuwait



- make sure their national plan says who will do things, when they must be done by and how they will pay for them.

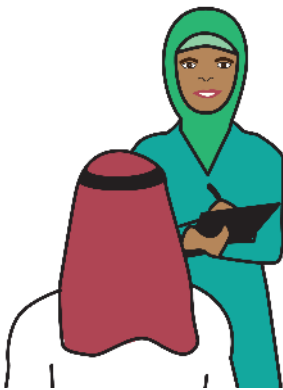




- make sure every part of the government understands the Disability Convention and uses it in their work



- ask the National Council for Human Rights to check how Kuwait is using the Disability Convention.



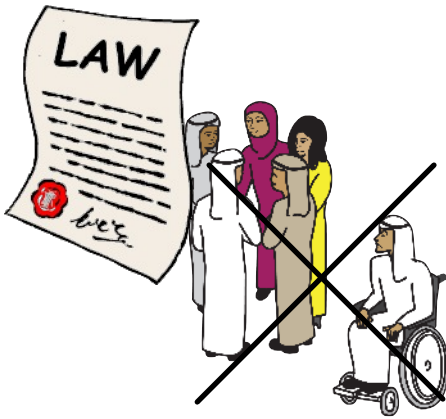
## 2. Better information

- ask questions about disability when they collect information about people who live in the country

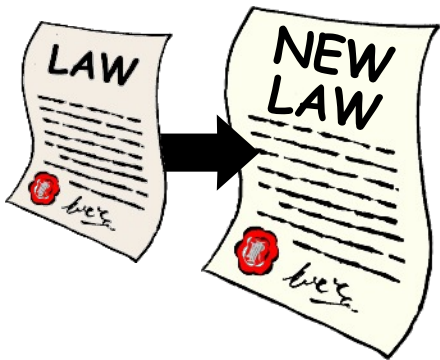


- collect information about children with disabilities

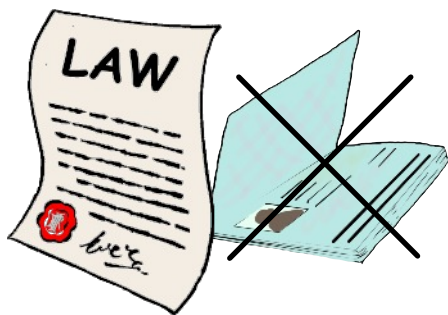
### 3. How other people think about people with disabilities



- the law must say it is wrong to discriminate against someone because of their disability



- change the way the law talks about people with disabilities. Talk about rights and take out words that make it sound like people are ill or need care



- make sure laws about disability cover people who do not have Kuwaiti passports. Especially Bidoon

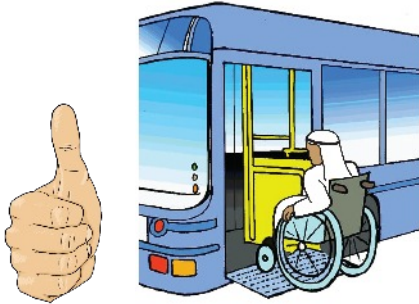


- tell the public about people with disabilities and their rights. Including the rights of women and girls with disabilities, and people with learning disabilities

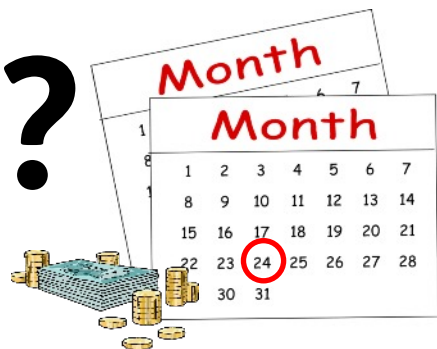


- make sure people who work for the government and other services know how to use the Disability Convention.

#### 4. Doing the same things as other people



- keep working on the plan to make streets, buildings and transport better for people with disabilities. Including poorer areas where people who are not Kuwaitis live



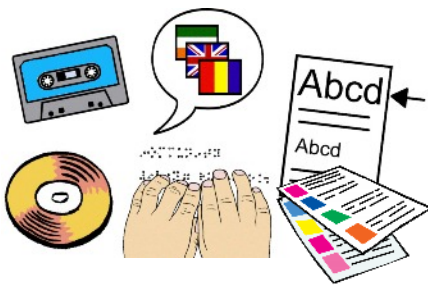
- say when these changes will happen and set aside money to pay for them



- use Kuwaiti sign language as an official language and let deaf people choose which sign language they use

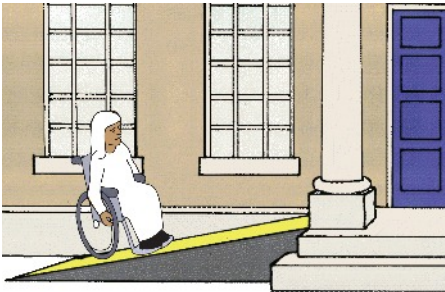


- share information about different ways to communicate. Including low cost ways to use technology.



## 5. Being involved

- make sure information about elections is accessible for people with all disabilities



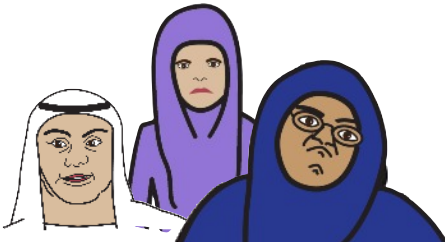
- make it easy for people with disabilities to get into buildings and vote without someone else doing it for them



- train election staff that all people with disabilities must be allowed to vote and how to support them



- support men and women with disabilities to be elected into local or national government



- follow the Disability Convention and support organisations of people with disabilities to be involved in public life. This includes people with mental health problems or people who have more than one disability.



## 6. School and college

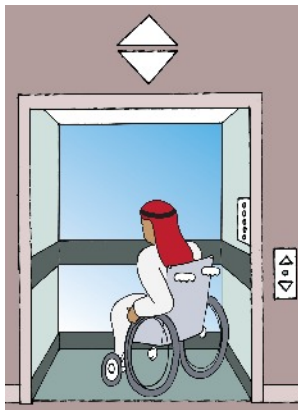
- write a plan to say when all schools and colleges will have the buildings, staff and equipment to support children with disabilities properly



- make sure all children with disabilities have a free primary education. Including Bidoon children



- make it easier for students with disabilities to study at college and university



- make the new buildings at Kuwait University accessible to people with different disabilities.

## 7. Work and having a job



- make sure companies work hard to include people with disabilities and make changes to help them get and keep a job

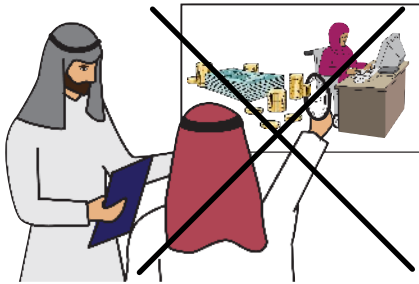


- give people with disabilities the same chances as other workers to have training and move on to better jobs.

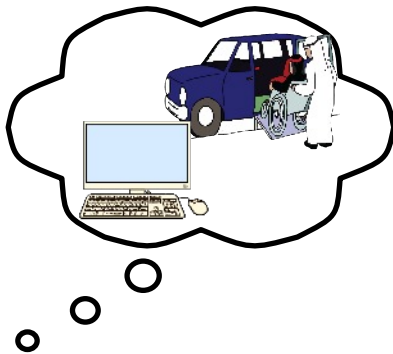


## 8. Social protection

- make sure money and benefits help people get the support they need in their community



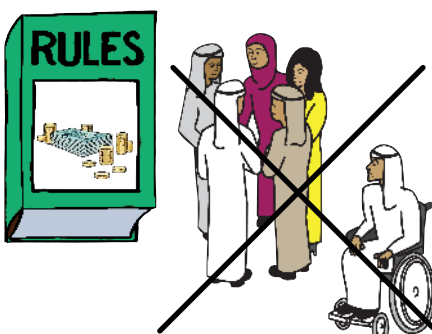
- make sure benefits do not take away other rights. For example, people should not have to choose between having benefits and having a job or education



- think about the extra things people with disabilities have to pay for



- look at discrimination against people with mental health problems because the law says this is not a disability



- make sure rules about who gets benefits do not discriminate against people with a disability and stop them getting other rights.



## 9. Living independently in the community

- have a clear plan to close big residential homes and set up more services in the community

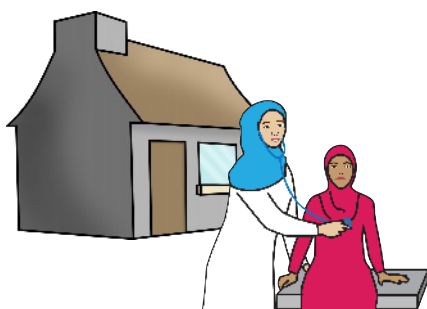


- do this urgently for children with disabilities



- plan how to close the al-Sabahiya residential care centre and how to give people with disabilities more dignity and privacy until this happens.

## 10. Health

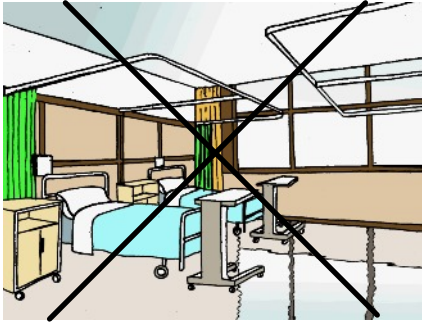


- build more services in the community so people with disabilities can get good healthcare near their homes. Have a good national plan for assistive technology to help people stay healthy and independent



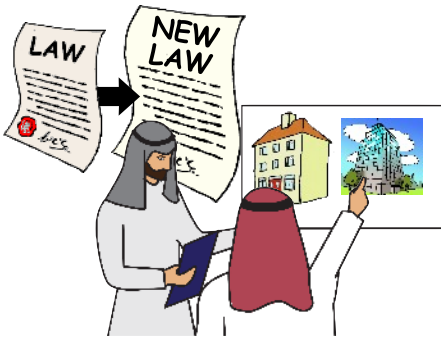


- make sure people are only given treatment they agree to



- close the mental health hospital ward where people live for many years.

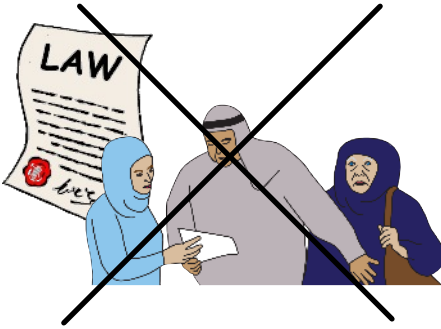
## 11. Making choices



- change the law so people with disabilities have the right to make their own decisions, with as much support as they need



- train people with disabilities and their families, courts, judges, staff and services about involving people with disabilities in their own decisions

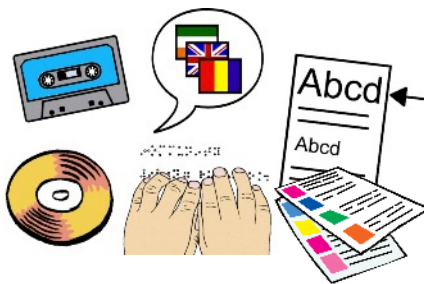


- get rid of any laws that take away a person's right to make their own decisions. Get rid of laws that allow someone else to decide for them



- give people with disabilities as much support as they need to understand and be involved in their own decisions.

## 12. Using the courts and justice system

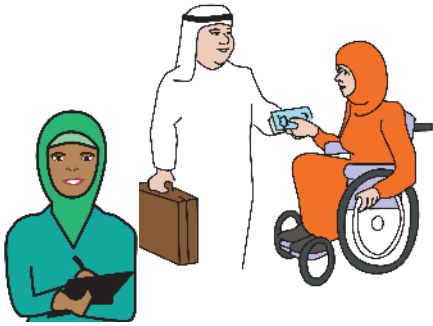


- make sure the police and courts give people with disabilities accessible information that is right for them



- make changes to courts and the way they work so people with disabilities can take part and be involved.

### 13. Working with the United Nations and other countries



- make sure the government only gives money to projects in other countries that include and support the rights of people with disabilities



- the United Nations team in Kuwait must help the government to keep with the Disability Convention



- make sure the plans of the United Nations team link together to include people with disabilities and have people with disabilities working with them.



## 7. What the words mean

**Accessible** – easy to use or understand.

**Assistive technology** - switches or other equipment that help you communicate or do things.

**Audio description** – when someone describes what is happening to help blind people understand a television programme or play.

**Benefits** - money the government gives to people who need help because they have a disability or cannot work.

**Bidoon** – people who live in Kuwait but do not have the same rights as Kuwaiti people because the government thinks they are not there legally.

**Convention** – a legal agreement between different countries.

**Disability pension** – money the government or your employer pays you if you cannot work.

**Discriminate** – to treat someone badly or unfairly because of who they are. For instance because of their disability.

**Election** – an organised way to choose or vote for people to be part of local or national government.

**Legal capacity** - means that anyone over 18 years old can make legal agreements or decisions.

**National Council for Human Rights** - an independent organisation that checks how the government uses the United Nations agreements that give people rights

**Primary school** – a school for children between the ages of about 5 and 11.

**Register** – when your name goes on an official list. Often to get services or support.

**Rights** – a rule about what every person is allowed to do or have. For example, the right to vote, use services or have an education. Rights should not be taken away from people. Many rights are put into laws to give people extra protection.

**Human Rights** – basic rights and freedoms that should happen for every person in the world. For example to be treated fairly, equally and with respect.

**Reproductive health** - the right to decide whether or not to have children and support to have healthy children.

**Sexual health** - the right to enjoy safe sexuality and keep well and healthy.

**Sign language** – a way for deaf people to communicate using signs using their hands and other body movements.

**Sign language interpretation** – translate what someone is saying into sign language or from sign language to the spoken word.

**Stereotype** - when people have a set idea about a group of people or type of person without really knowing them.

**Social protection** – things that give everyone the same chances in life. For example, having enough food, basic healthcare, going to school or money to help pay for things.

**Vote** – an official way to choose between 2 or more people in an election for local or national government.

**Witness** - someone who has information or can say that something happened.



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