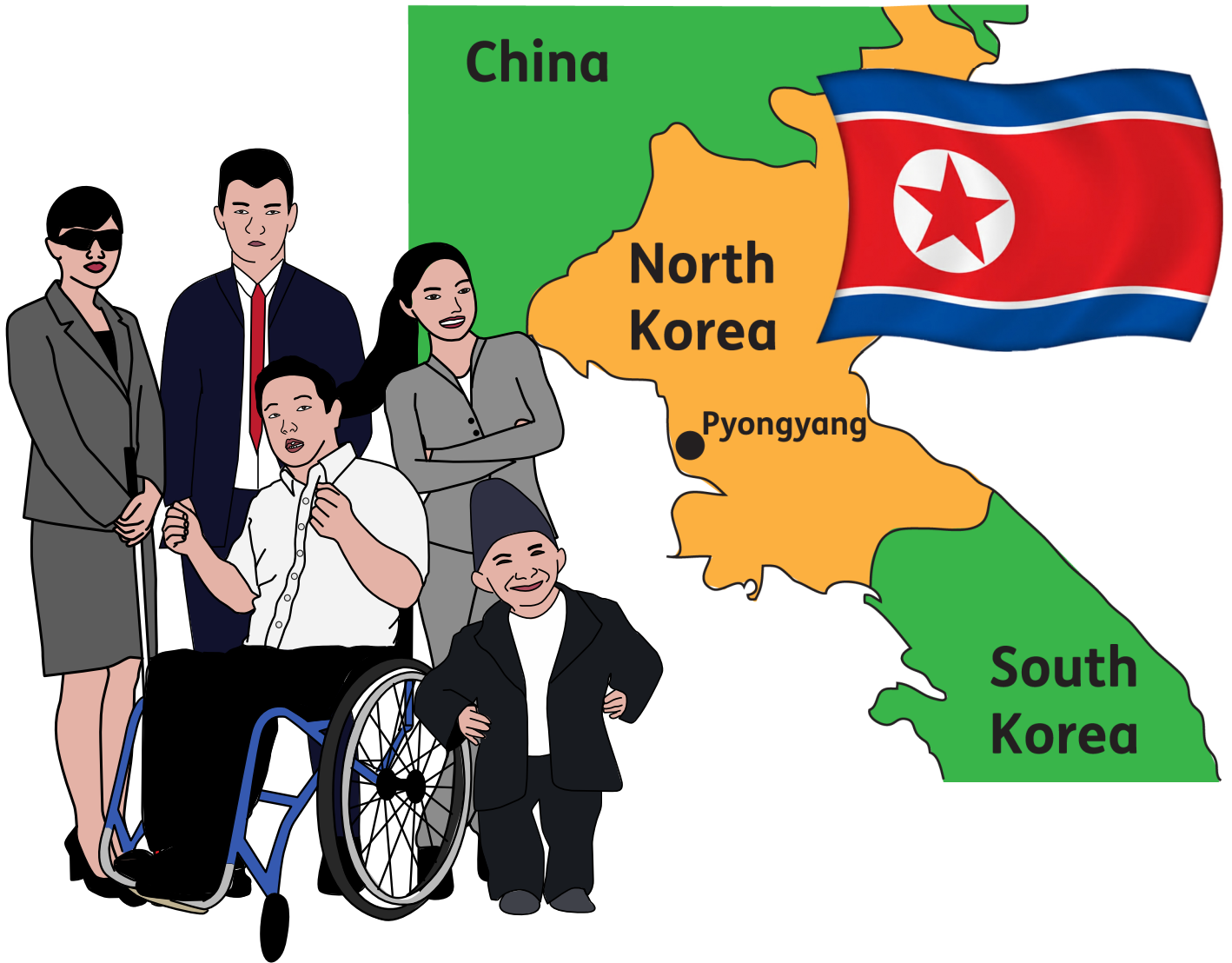




The rights of people with disabilities.



What is happening in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea?



EasyRead version of:
Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities on her visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (A/HRC/37/56/Add.1).



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What the words mean

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Sometimes we need to use new or difficult words.



These words are in bold and there is a list of what they mean at the end of the report.

1. About this report



The **United Nations (UN)** is a group of different countries that work together to try to make the world a safer place for everyone.



Every year the **Special Rapporteur** writes reports for the **United Nations** about rights and people with disabilities.



The **Special Rapporteur** is Catalina Devandas-Aguilar. She helps countries understand what they need to do to make sure people with disabilities get their rights.



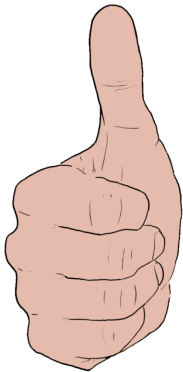
This is an EasyRead version of the report on her visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in May 2017. In this paper, we call this **North Korea**.



Catalina asked if she could visit North Korea. She met government officials, people with disabilities and their organisations. She visited some hospitals, schools and services that support them.



Catalina could not meet people from some government departments or visit a mental health service. She only met a few people with disabilities and was not able to talk to them in private.



Catalina thanks the government and everyone who helped organise her visit. Especially the Korean Federation for the Protection of the Disabled (**KFPD**).



2. About North Korea



What is North Korea like?

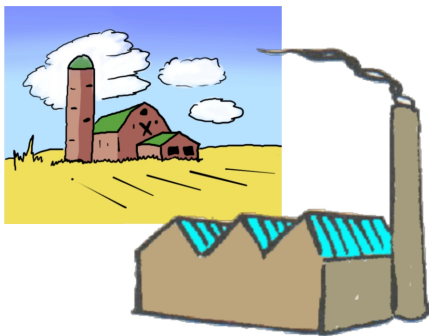
North Korea is a country in East Asia.



About 25 million people live there.



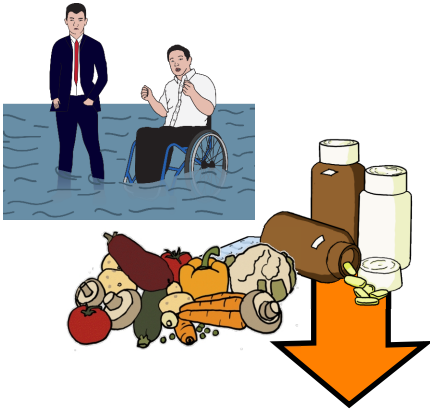
Pyongyang is the capital city.



The government owns all farmland and factories.



It provides food, housing, work, education, healthcare and other services to everyone.



But there have been floods and earthquakes in the last few years. This means many people do not have enough food, water, or medicines.



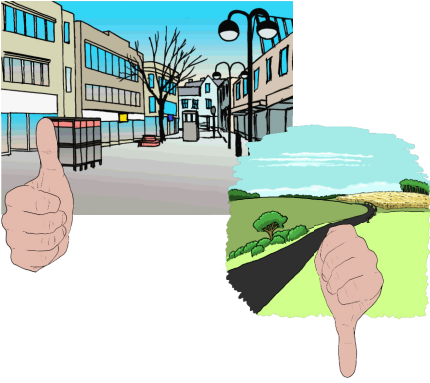
North Korea is testing **nuclear missiles**. Because of this, the UN and other countries have **sanctions** against North Korea. This means they will not sell them things or send them money.



They hope this will make North Korea stop building **nuclear missiles**.



Because of the **sanctions**, North Korea is cut off from the rest of the world. This can be really bad for people with disabilities. They do not hear about technology or other new ways that could support them.



People in Pyongyang have better services and rights than people who live in the country areas.



People cannot travel freely in North Korea. This stops people with disabilities getting to services quickly or using special services in the cities.



How many people with disabilities live there?

About 6 out of every 100 people have a disability. More women have disabilities than men.



3. People with disabilities in North Korea



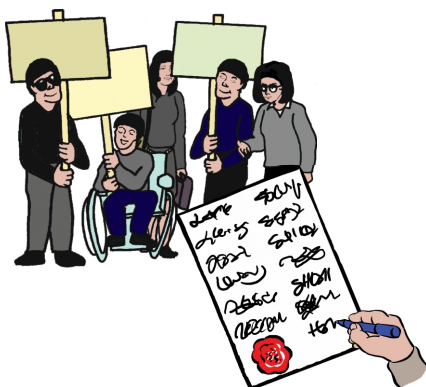
In 2016 the Government signed the **United Nations disability Convention**. This is an agreement about the rights of people with disabilities.



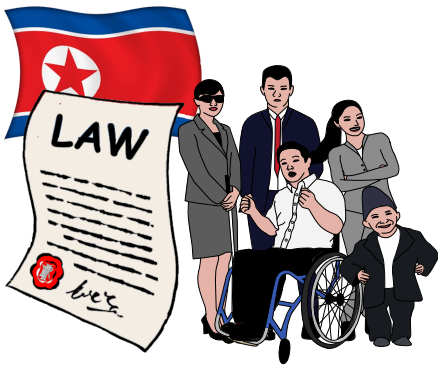
This means the Government must make sure people with disabilities get their **human rights**.



Human rights are basic rights and freedoms that should happen for everyone.



The government still need to sign other UN agreements about **human rights**. Catalina said the country should ask other **special rapporteurs** to visit the country.

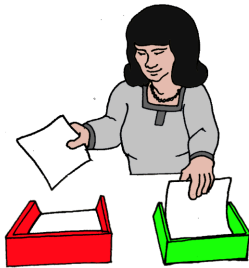


Using the law to protect people

North Korea has some laws that protect people with disabilities. People have the right to:



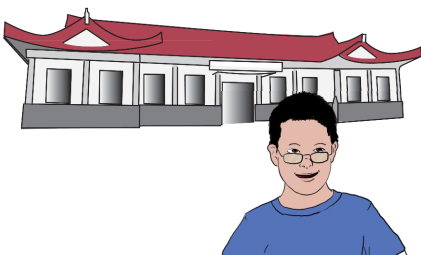
- free medical care and support if they can no longer work because of their age, illness or disability



- work



- education, and have support to learn skills.



Children with disabilities have the same rights as other children to education and health care. But many do not go to school.



North Korean law explains what a disability is in the same way as the UN disability **Convention** and supports things like:



- making it easier to use services or buildings



- an organised way to get information about people with disabilities



- a national organisation for people with disabilities.

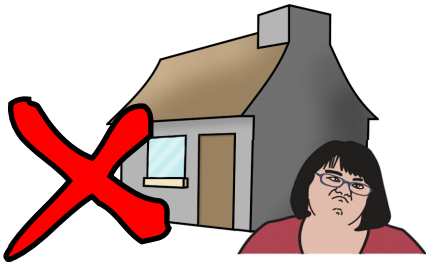


But the law only covers some things in the agreement. People with disabilities still do not have an equal right to:

- use their rights



- travel where they want to



- live independently



- be part of their community



- say what they think.



Women with disabilities are also treated unfairly.



Catalina could not look at how all laws might affect people with disabilities. But she thought some of the laws use **offensive** words to talk about them.



She said many laws go against the UN disability **Convention**. They do not give people with disabilities the right to:

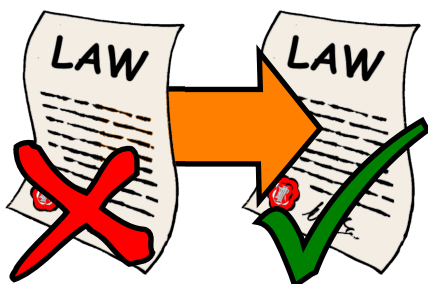
- make decisions



- vote



- or take on responsibility.



Catalina said North Korea should look at all its laws and change or get rid of those that take away people's rights.

Making the UN disability Convention work in North Korea



Catalina thinks the North Korean government is trying to make things better for people with disabilities.



A government organisation called **KFPD** helps other parts of the Government understand how to give people with disabilities their rights.



KFPD is also working on a national plan to protect people with disabilities. Catalina said it is important to finish the plan soon. It must make things better for people in all areas of the country.



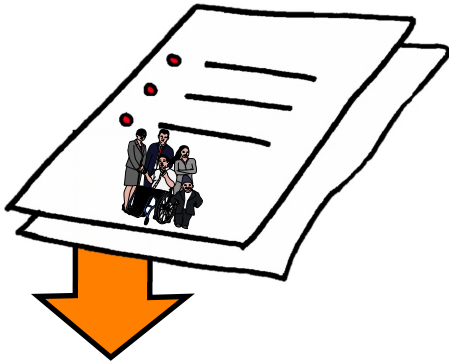
The government must also set up an independent way to check how North Korea is using the UN disability **Convention**.



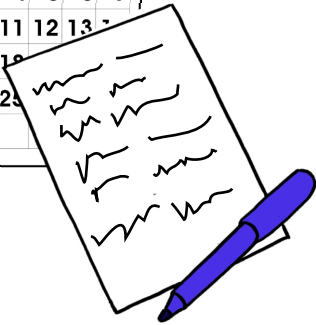
4. What makes things difficult?



Not knowing about people with disabilities



There is still not much information about people with disabilities in North Korea. Catalina's report is mostly about what she learnt when she visited the country and spoke to people.



She is pleased that the **census** in 2018 will ask questions about disability. A **census** is when a government counts the people who live there and finds out more about them. This helps them plan services for the future.



The Government told Catalina that the it collects information about disability from family doctors. She could not look at this information and the UN disability **Convention** says governments should do more than this.

Discrimination



Discrimination can happen when other people think disability is an illness that needs to be treated or cured. This stops them thinking about what everyone should do to include people with disabilities.



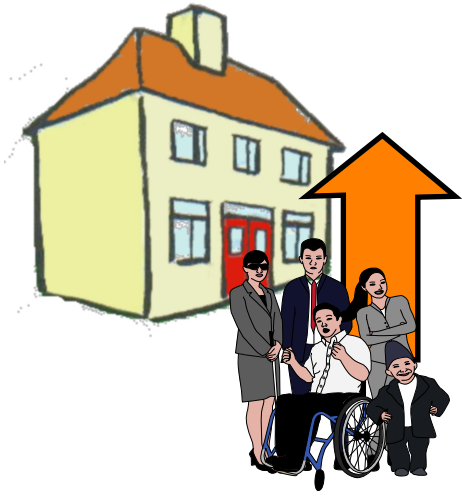
Many North Korean people also think it is good to be strong and healthy and help their country.



People often pick on people with disabilities because they think they are weak or do not work hard enough for their country.



Many people with disabilities are kept away from other people. Things are especially difficult for women with disabilities, who feel ashamed and stay at home.



Catalina said too many people with disabilities live or get special services away from other people. This makes it harder for them to be treated fairly and have the same rights as other people.

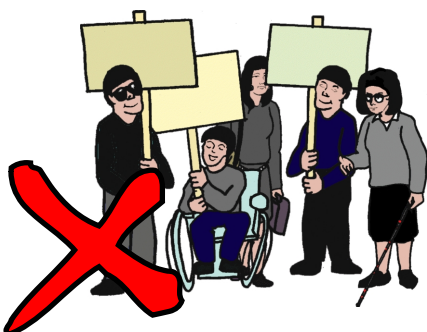


The government must do more to change how other people think and talk about people with a disability. Newspapers, TV and radio can help with this.

Catalina got little or no information about:



- autistic people
- people with learning disabilities
- people with mental health problems
- little people
- people with severe disabilities.



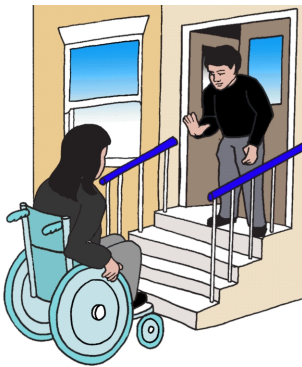
This means she could not find out about them or their rights.

Not being able to do the same things as other people

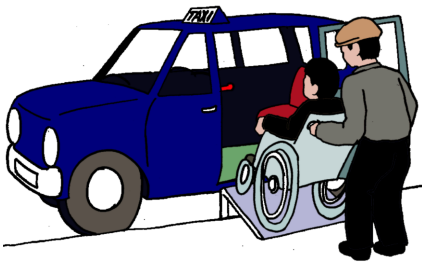


Getting around

Catalina said most people with disabilities find streets and buildings in North Korea difficult to use. This includes new public buildings, schools and airports.



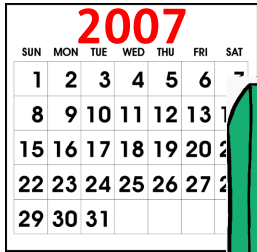
It is also difficult to get in and out of houses and transport. This can stop people with disabilities being independent and involved in their communities.



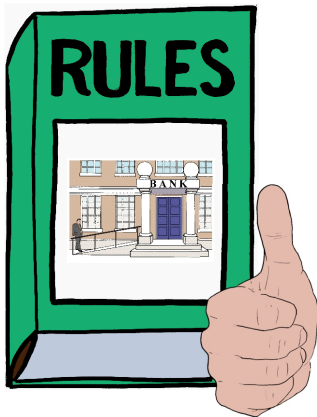
Since 2017, people with disabilities can get free taxis in Pyongyang.



The government has rules about how to make streets, buildings and transport better for people with disabilities.



But Catalina said these rules are out of date.



The government would like to see what other countries are doing. This will help them make their rules better.



The government should make sure people stick to these rules when they build or repair public buildings and roads.

Information and communication



Catalina said the government was trying to help deaf people and blind people in North Korea with:

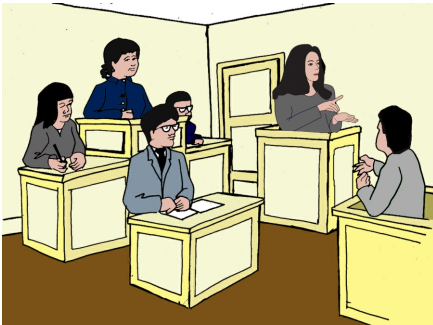
- an official Korean sign language



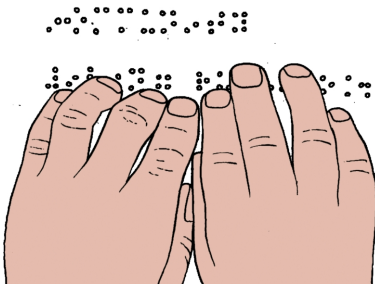
- trained deaf sign language interpreters



- free text messages for deaf people



- laws that allow sign language interpreters in police stations and courts



- audio and **braille** information in some public buildings.



But TV programmes and public events do not use subtitles or sign language.



There are no screen readers to help blind people use computers and not enough information in **Braille**.

KFPD



The **KFPD** is helping people with disabilities in Pyongyang use new technology. But this is not happening in other parts of the country.

Not being involved



The **KFPD** is helping people with disabilities set up their own groups. Deaf people and blind people are on the government group that looks at rights for people with disabilities.

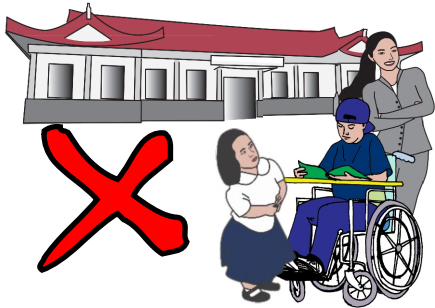


But Catalina said the government should support people with disabilities to get involved in making local and national decisions. This should happen in country areas as well as the cities and include people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, mental health problems or **little people**.

Education



Young people who use wheelchairs often learn at home because they cannot get into schools. There are separate schools for deaf and blind people. But they said they want to use the same services as other people.

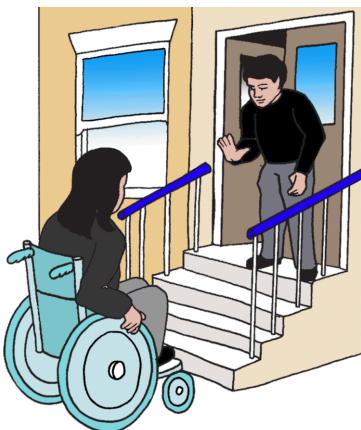


Many children and young people with disabilities in North Korea do not go to school. It is very hard for most of them to get into university.

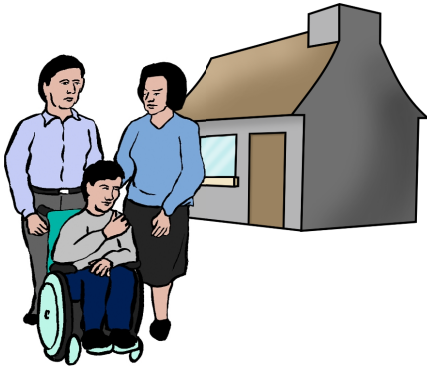


This is because:

- schools do not give them extra support to learn



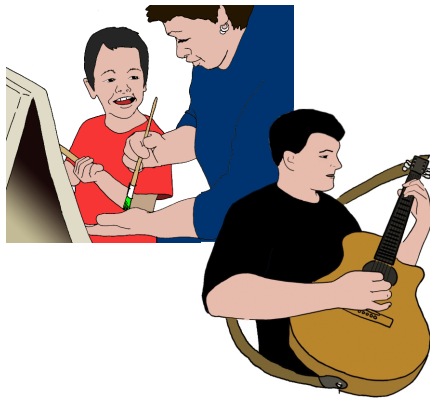
- buildings are difficult to use



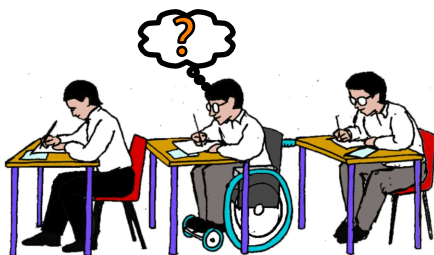
- parents keep their children at home because schools do not expect them to learn much



- parents do not want their children to stay away from home at schools for deaf or blind children



- deaf or blind children mostly learn arts, crafts or music. Only very few of them get into university



- most children with disabilities are not taught the things they need to know for the test to get into university.

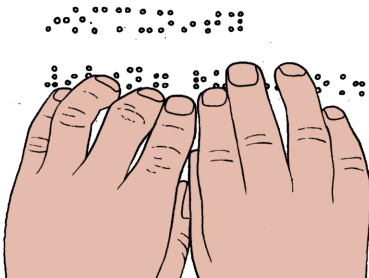


Catalina said the government must change things so children with disabilities can go to the same schools as other children. They must have the same chance to go to university.



This means making sure they have:

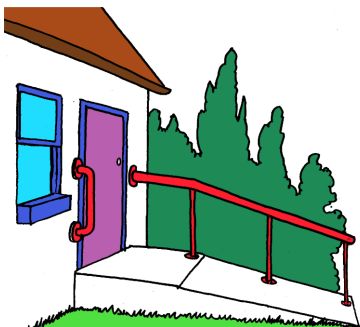
- support with sign language



- books in **Braille**



- extra support



- buildings they can get around in

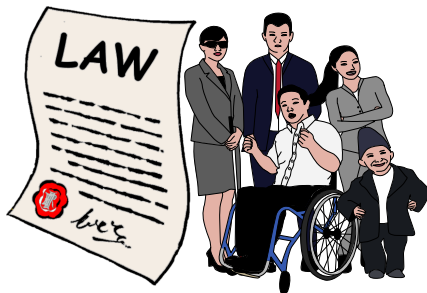


- any other changes they need to help them learn.

Social protection



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



The government shares out food, housing, work, education, healthcare and other services. Their laws say they must support people with disabilities or people who cannot work because they are old and ill. They say women have the same rights as men.



Catalina could not check if this is happening or not.



She said everyone should have the same right to extra money or support. Not just people who had been soldiers or worked hard for the country and became disabled.



The government needs to plan how to support babies and children with disabilities who have no families in the community instead of caring for them in orphanages.



Health

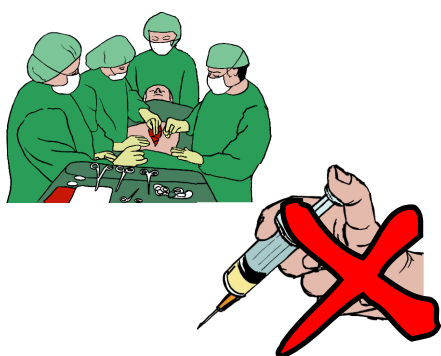
Everyone in North Korea gets free health services.



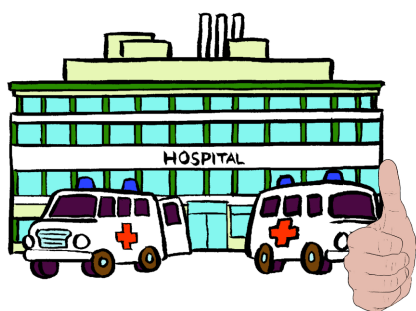
There are many hospitals, clinics and family doctors.



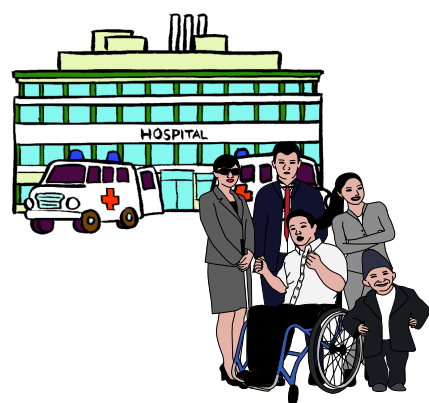
But a lot of the buildings are old and have problems. They cannot do many tests and do not have a lot of equipment or medicines.



Catalina could not believe it when she found that some doctors operate on patients without using anaesthetics (drugs that send you to sleep so you do not feel any pain).



She visited good hospitals and centres for children with disabilities in Pyongyang.



Catalina said there should be services like this for all people with disabilities in the rest of North Korea.

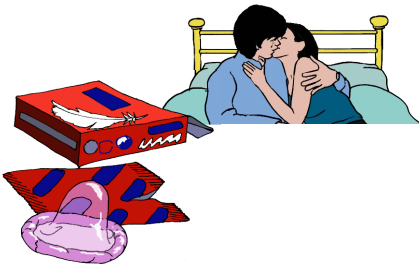


She heard how the children's hospital in Pyongyang uses technology to share training and information with hospitals and doctors in other areas. If this works properly she thinks it is a really good idea.

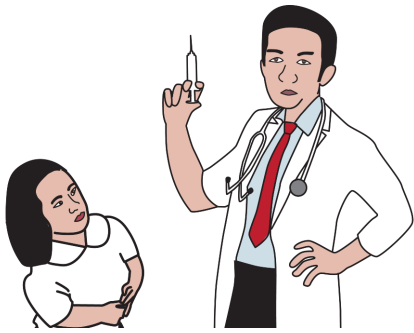


Catalina found out about **sexual** and **reproductive health** services that should support women with disabilities with things like:

- information about sexuality and being pregnant
- information and treatment for diseases that are passed on through sex.



But she feels women with disabilities do not have much choice over these things. Sometimes they have operations or drugs that they do not choose to stop them getting pregnant.



Catalina was worried when she heard doctors try different treatments on **little people** to try to make them taller. She said this should stop and the **KFPD** must protect them like it does other people with disabilities.

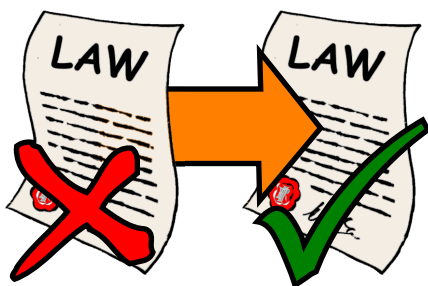


Legal capacity

Legal **capacity** means being able to make your own decisions. Other people must respect those decisions.



In North Korea a court can say a person cannot make decisions because of their disability. The court then chooses someone to do this for them.



This is against the UN disability **Convention**. Catalina asked the government to change the law so everyone can make their own decisions. People with disabilities should have support to make their own decisions if they need it.

Other things

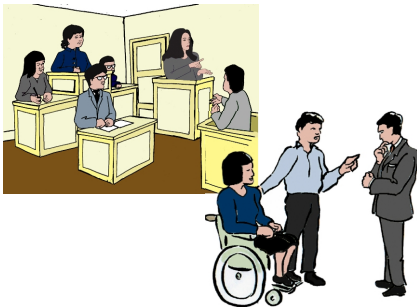


Catalina could not visit any mental health services or speak to people who use them. This means she does not know what things are like for them.

She also could not find out about:



- people who are held for treatment they do not agree to



- whether people with disabilities get support in court.



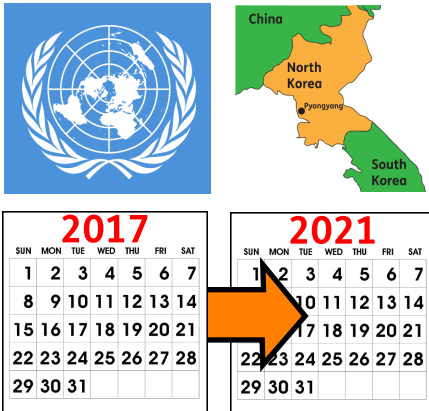
She heard about special workshops where people with disabilities can work and about their rights to work in other places.



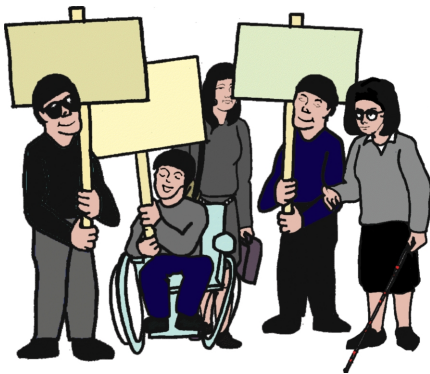
Catalina said it would be good to support people with disabilities to work with other people, not just in special workshops.



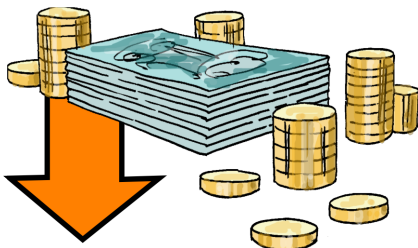
5. What the United Nations and other countries can do



The **United Nations** and North Korea agreed how to work together from 2017 to 2021.



The UN will support the government with plans to treat men and women equally and make sure everyone gets their **human rights**.



The **United Nations** in North Korea asks countries for money each year to help people, including people with disabilities. But they are getting less money.



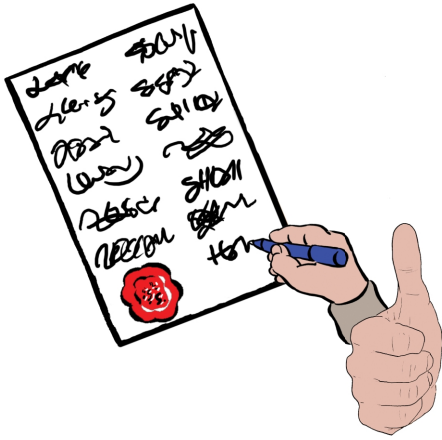
This might be because other countries disagree with the government in North Korea.



Catalina wants other countries to support North Korea to understand about **human rights** and how to include people with disabilities in everything they do.



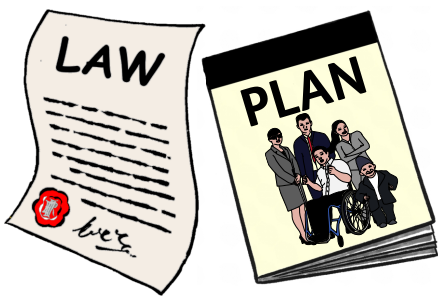
6. What happens next?



Catalina is pleased the North Korean government signed the UN disability **Convention** and invited her to visit the country. They helped her find out what is happening for people with disabilities and what could be better.

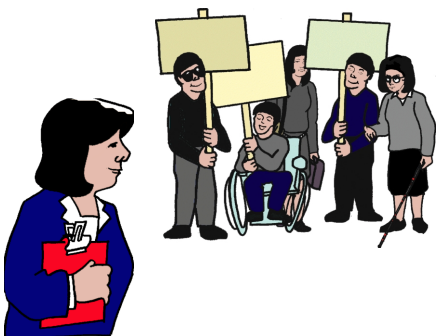


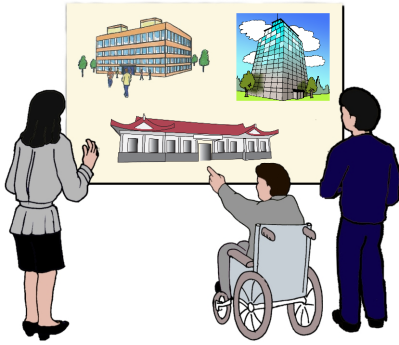
The North Korean government should do more to help people with disabilities get their rights.



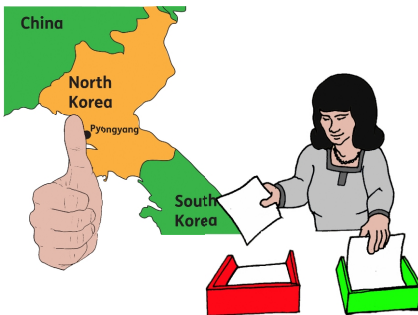
Now the government must make sure:

- they use their plans and laws to change things
- they check that people with disabilities get the same rights as everyone else





- people with disabilities are included in making decisions, education, work and services.



It is better for the country and for people with disabilities if they are involved, working and earning money.



Some things about this visit were difficult. But Catalina thinks the **United Nations** and North Korea can now work together to make life better for people with disabilities.



7. North Korea should work on these things

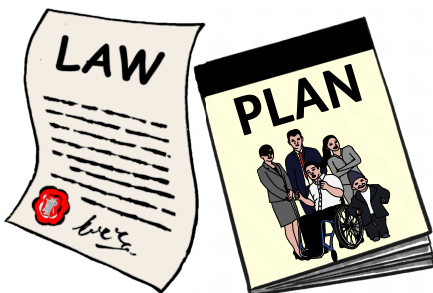


1. Better laws

- sign the UN agreements on **human rights** and send the UN all the reports it needs



- invite other **Special Rapporteurs** to North Korea



- make sure all laws and plans follow the **UN disability Convention** and give people with disabilities their rights

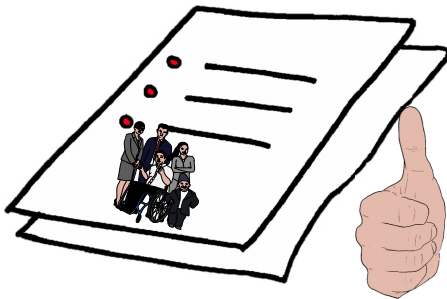


- finish the plan to protect people with disabilities



- involve **KFPD** and people with disabilities in checking whether the UN disability **Convention**, laws and plans are working properly.

2. Better information



- get better at knowing how many people there are with different types of disability. This includes how old they are, where they live and whether they are men or women.

3. How other people think about people with disabilities



- tell the public about people with disabilities and their rights



- help people in all parts of North Korea understand about disabilities that often get left out and have better services for them



- make sure TV, radio and newspapers show that people with disabilities are not different from other people and use the right words to talk about them.

4. Doing the same things as other people



- have a plan that says when the government will make streets, buildings and transport better for people with disabilities



- have rules to make sure people with disabilities get information in the way they need it.

5. Being involved



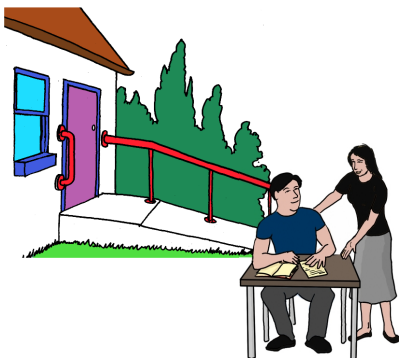
- set up organisations to include and speak for people with all types of disabilities. This must include physical disabilities, learning disabilities, **little people**, mental health problems, and complex disabilities



- make sure all people with disabilities can understand and get involved in laws and plans that affect everyone. This must include women

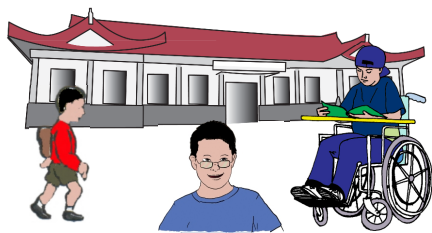


- involve more people with disabilities in local and national government.



6. School and college

- make sure all school and colleges have the buildings, staff and equipment to support children with disabilities properly



- support children with disabilities to be included in schools that other children go to



- give people with disabilities the same chance as everyone else to go to college or university and get better jobs.

7. Social protection



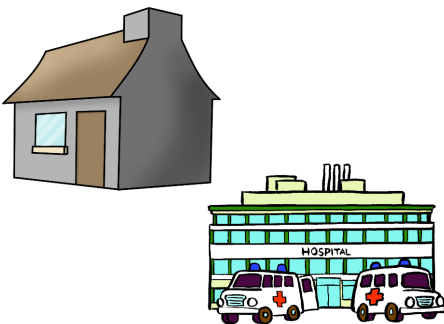
- make sure everyone with a disability has **social protection**. This includes people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, **little people**, mental health problems, and complex disabilities



- plan for children with disabilities to live in the community and not in big services away from everyone else



- make sure doctors think about **human rights** when they decide if someone has a disability.

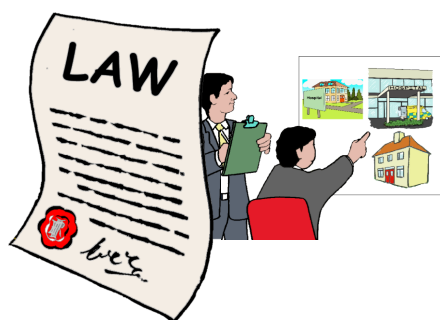


8. Health

- have health services for people with disabilities close to their homes in all parts of North Korea



- support people with disabilities to use the same health services as everyone else.



9. Legal capacity

- change the law so people with disabilities can make their own decisions and other people cannot just decide for them



- make sure everyone understands about **legal capacity** and how to support people with disabilities to make their own decisions.

10. Other things



- make it easier for people with all types of disabilities to use the courts. Have information in ways people can understand, support to go to court and buildings they feel comfortable in.



- support people with disabilities to work in the same places as other people. Not separate workshops.



- help the United Nations and other international organisations meet and talk to people with disabilities in all parts of North Korea.

11. Working with other countries

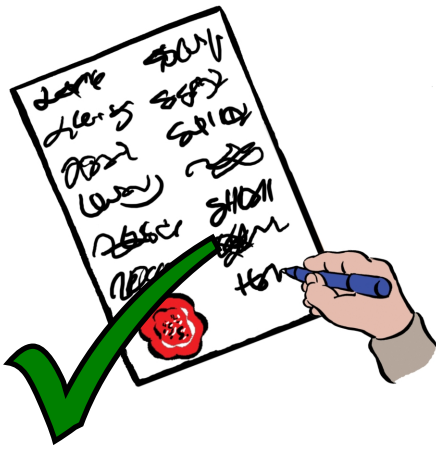
The **United Nations** in North Korea and other organisations should:



- use their money and skills to train and help the North Korean Government understand about rights and people with disabilities



- talk about rights and people with disabilities in all their plans and projects and employ people with disabilities to work for them



- support North Korea to keep to the UN disability Convention and make any changes it needs to.



5. What the words mean

Braille – a way of writing things so blind people can feel the words with their fingers.

Census – when a government counts the people who live there and finds out more about them.

Convention – an agreement between different countries.

Discriminate – treat someone worse than other people because of who they are.

Human Rights – basic rights and freedoms that should happen for every person in the world.

KFPD - The Korean Federation for the Protection of the Disabled.

Legal capacity – Legal capacity means being able to make your own decisions.

Little people – People who are much shorter than other people because of a medical condition. Usually no more than 4 feet 10 inches or 147 centimetres tall.

North Korea – the short name for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

Nuclear missiles – weapons that can be used to attack other countries

Offensive – something that is not pleasant or can insult or upset people

Rights – things that should happen for every person.

Sanctions – when countries will not buy or sell things to another country to try to make it keep to international laws.

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.

Special Rapporteur – a person working for the UN who helps countries understand what they need to do to make sure people with disabilities get their rights.

United Nations (UN) – a group of 193 different countries that work together to try to make the world a better and safer place for everyone.



Credits

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