Country Profile on Disability
Republic of Palau

August 2026

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)

International Development Center of Japan, Inc.
Koei Research & Consulting Inc.

HM
JR
26-073

This study was commissioned by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (hereinafter referred to as "JICA") and conducted by the International Development Center of Japan, Inc. and Koei Research & Consulting Inc. This report is based on an analysis of literature and online surveys conducted in Japan from December 2025 to August 2026, as well as online questionnaires completed by relevant organizations of the target country.

Country Profile on Disability
Republic of Palau
Table of Contents

1. Basic Profile 1
1-1. Basic Indicators 1
1-2. Definition of Disability and Indicators on Disability 2
2. Administration and Policy on Disability 5
2-1. Administration on Disability 5
2-2. Laws and Policies on Disability 7
2-3. Measures on Disability 9
3. International Treaties and International Cooperation 22
3-1. Status of Implementation Following Ratification of the CRPD 22
3-2. Status of Implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty 22
3-3. Initiatives in the Disability Sector within SDG-Related Policies 22
3-4. Ratification of and Initiatives regarding Other International Treaties related to Disabilities and Development 22
3-5. International Cooperation on Disability 23
4. Disability-related Organizations and Activities 26
4-1. Organizations of Persons with Disabilities 26
4-2. Disability Support Organizations 26
5. Barriers and Needs Faced by Persons with Disabilities 27
5-1. Barriers to and Needs regarding Healthcare Services 27
5-2. Barriers and Needs regarding Education 27
5-3. Barriers and Needs Related to Employment 28
5-4. Barriers and Needs Related to Mobility 29
5-5. Barriers to and Needs regarding Information Access 29
5-6. Barriers and Needs regarding Gender 30
6. References 31

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1 Percentage of Functional Limitation (all ages) (2020) 3
Figure 2 Percentage of Persons with Disabilities by Age Group (ages 5 and above) (2020) 4
Figure 3 Percentage of Persons with Disabilities by Residential Area (2020).....4

Table 1 Entities Responsible for Disability Issues in Palau 5
Table 2 Types of Disabilities Among Special Education Program Participants 13

List of Abbreviations

CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CTE	Career and Technical Education
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
ILO	International Labour Organization
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
PPE	Palau Parents Empowered
RPPL	Republic of Palau Public Law
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNSCDF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
VNR	Voluntary National Review

1. Basic Profile

1-1. Basic Indicators[1]

Gross Domestic Product[2] per Capita	USD 15,610	2023

Expenditures by Sector

Healthcare (% of GDP)	14.28%	2022
Education (% of GDP)	3.5%	2023
Social protection (% of GDP)[3]	0.2%	2019

Population

Total Population	17,695	2024
Male (% of total population)	53.9%	
Female (% of total population)	46.1%	
Urban Population (% of total population)	79.2%	
Rural Population (% of total population)	20.8%	
Life expectancy at birth (total)	69.2 years	2023
Male	67.1 years	
Female	71.7 years	

Health

Prevalence of undernourishment (% of population)	N/A	
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	19.1	2023

Education

Education System[4]		
Primary Education	6 years	
Compulsory Education	12 years	
Literacy rate (% of ages 15 and above)	100.0%	2020
Adult male	100.0%	
Adult female	100.0%	

[1] Based on the World Bank database (https://data.worldbank.org/indicator (Accessed: 18 March 2026)).
[2] Gross Domestic Product; hereinafter referred to as "GDP."
[3] Excluding healthcare. Based on the ILO (2024) World Social Protection Report, https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/WSPR_2024_EN_WEB_1.pdf (Accessed: 5 April 2026).
[4] Palau's education system consists of elementary school (6 years), middle school (2 years), and high school (4 years). Compulsory education spans 12 years, from age 6 to 17. Based on the Palau Ministry of Education website (https://www.palaumoe.net/?p=Schools) (Accessed: 19 January 2026).

School enrollment		
Primary (% gross) (total)	100.7%	2023
Male	102.2%	
Female	98.9%	
Secondary (% gross) (total)	97.2%	2023
Male	96.9%	
Female	97.6%	
Tertiary (% gross) (total)	41.1%	2023
Male	33.2%	
Female	49.6%	

Employment

Unemployment[5] (total)	2.1%	2023
Male (% of male labour force)	2.2%	
Female (% of female labour force)	2.0%	

1-2. Definition of Disability and Indicators on Disability

1-2-1. Definition of Disability

The Palau National Code[6] of the Republic of Palau (hereinafter referred to as "Palau") defines disability as "…a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of a person's major life activities." According to the State Party's report submitted by the Government of Palau to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as the "State Party's Report") in 2018, there is a lack of consistency in the definition of "disability" across current laws and policies[7]. Since some laws still use the term "handicap," the State Party's Report points out the need to amend domestic laws to ensure consistency with the "National Disability Inclusive Policy," which will be described later. The Government of Palau ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter referred to as "CRPD") in 2013 and acceded the Optional Protocol on the same day. Since then, it has been promoting the development of domestic laws in accordance with the Convention.

1-2-2. Indicators on Disabilities

The Office of Planning and Statistics of Palau has conducted a national census every five

[5] https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/plw/ (Accessed: 20 April 2026)

[6] The official code systematizing the public laws of the Republic of Palau. Public laws are enacted individually and may be amended or repealed (Accessed: 20 April 2026).

[7] The Social Security Act (1987) defines a disability as "an inability to engage in any substantial gainful employment by reason of any medically determined physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted, or can be expected to last, for a continuous period of not less than twelve (12) months."

years, in principle, since 1995[8]. According to the 2020 census, the total number of respondents who reported experiencing some difficulty with any of the six functions assessed by the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning was 3,418, accounting for 19% of the total population.

Number of Persons with Disabilities (all ages)	3,418	19.4% of the total population[9]	2020
Male	N/A		
Female	N/A		

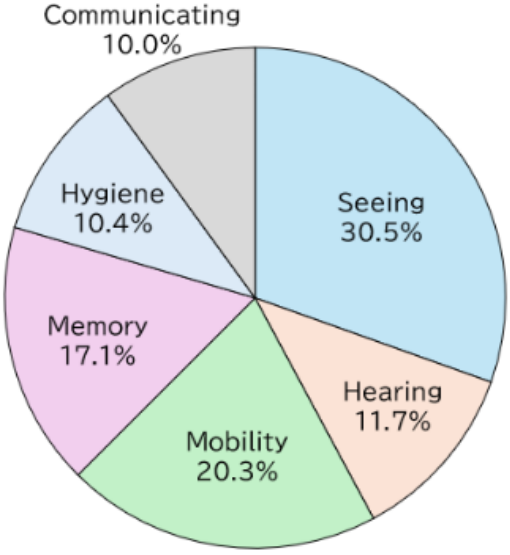


Figure 1 Percentage of Functional Limitation (all ages) (2020)

The largest proportion is "Seeing," at 30.5% of the total. This is followed by "Mobility" at 20.3% and "Memory" at 17.1%, which also account for relatively high proportions. "Hearing" stands at 11.7%, "Hygiene" at 10.4%, and "Communicating" at 10.0%, which are slightly lower than other types of disabilities.

Source: Prepared by the study team based on the 2020 Census

[8] https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/finance/budgetandplanning/census-of-population-and-housing/ (Accessed: 20 April 2026).

[9] Total population: 17,614 (2020). Calculated based on the results of the 2020 Census. https://www.palaugov.pw/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2020_Census-of-Population-Housing-and-Agriculture-Basic-Tables.pdf (Accessed: 20 April 2026)

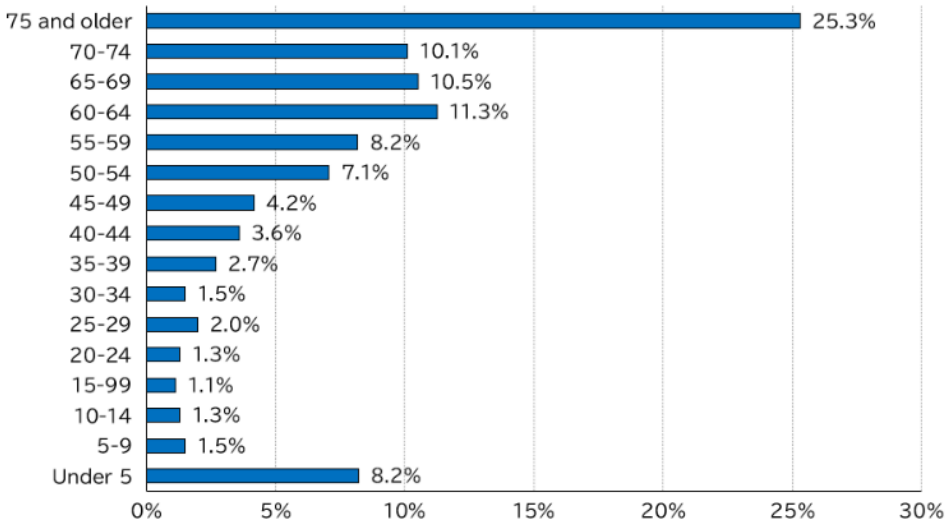


Figure 2 Percentage of Persons with Disabilities by Age Group (ages 5 and above) (2020)

The largest group is "75 and older," which accounts for 25.3% of the total. This is followed by those "60–64," at 11.3%; "65–69," at 10.5%; and "70–74," at 10.1%, indicating a high proportion of older adults. The proportion of younger age groups is relatively low, with those aged "10–14" and "20–24" each accounting for 1.3%, and those aged "15–19" accounting for just 1.1%. Additionally, the "25–29" age group accounts for 2.0% and the "30–34" age group for 1.5%, indicating that the proportion of persons in their 20s and 30s is also small. Additionally, starting from the "45–49" age group, the proportion tends to increase with age, rising particularly sharply among those aged 60 and older. On the other hand, the "under 5" age group accounts for 8.2%.

Source: Prepared by the study team based on the 2020 Census

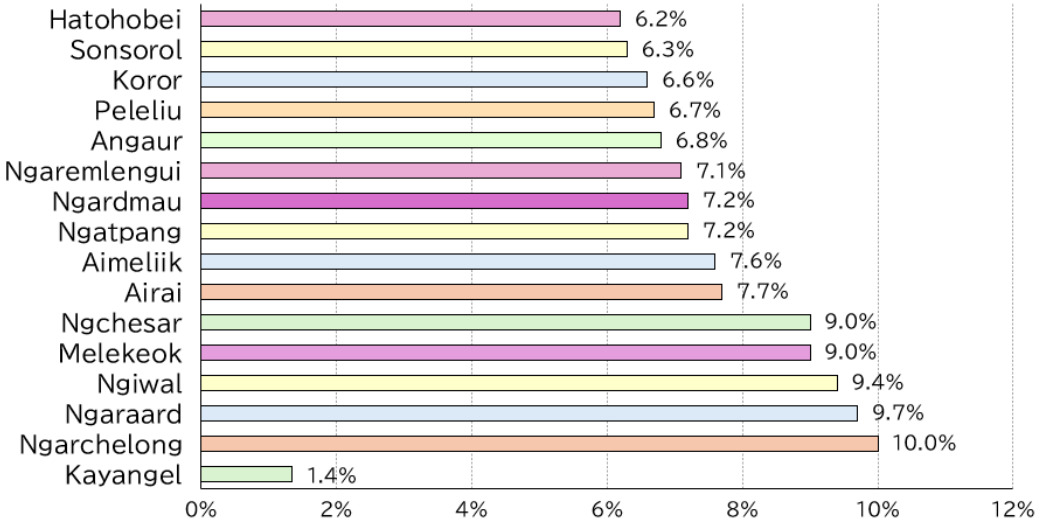


Figure 3 Percentage of Persons with Disabilities by Residential Area (2020)

The highest proportion is in "Ngarchelong," at 10.0% of the total. This is followed by "Ngaraard" at 9.7%, "Ngiwal State" at 9.4%, and "Melekeok" and "Ngchesar" at 9.0% each. The lowest proportion is in "Kayangel," at just 1.4%. In addition, many states fall within the 6–8% range, including "Hatohobei" at 6.2%, "Sonsorol State" at 6.3%, and "Koror" at 6.6%.

Source: Prepared by the study team based on the 2020 Census

2. Administration and Policy on Disability

2-1. Administration on Disability

<Central government>

Entities responsible for disability Issues

Table 1 Entities Responsible for Disability Issues in Palau

No.	Name	Overview
1	Ministry of Health and Human Services https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/health/ https://www.facebook.com/MHHSPalau	A government agency responsible for services for persons with disabilities, with a focus on medical services. It works to improve the inclusion and accessibility of persons with disabilities in the community. Following the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act in 2024, a Disability Unit was established within the Division of Human Services of the Bureau of Public Health to strengthen the agency's capacity. The Division of Human Services serves as the government's focal point for implementation of the CRPD[10]. The Division of Human Services is responsible for overseeing and providing financial assistance to persons with disabilities. The Minister serves as the chair of the Coordinating Committee of Persons with Disabilities, which was established under the Persons with Disabilities Act.
2	Ministry of Human Resources, Culture, Tourism, and Development https://ministryofhrctd.pw/	Pursuant to the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act, the Ministry collaborates with the Ministry of Health and Human Services to implement comprehensive policies grounded in the rights of persons with disabilities. The Bureau of Human Resources is responsible for career development and the recruitment of civil servants, and promotes the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the workforce.
3	Ministry of Education https://www.palaumoe.net/	The Ministry is responsible for promoting inclusive education by providing special education programs. These special education programs, funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Education, provide specialized services, including the development of Individualized Education Plans (hereinafter referred to as "IEP"), to children with disabilities in public schools, in accordance with the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

[10] At the time the State Party's Report (2018) was submitted, the Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs (MCCA) (at that time) served as the government's focal point for the implementation of the CRPD.

		(hereinafter referred to as "U.S. IDEA").
4	Ministry of State https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/state/	The central administrative body of the national government, overseeing internal affairs, national defense, foreign affairs, trade, consular affairs, and broadcasting. It has a Gender Division responsible for gender mainstreaming policies and addressing the intersectionality of disability. Palau does not have an independent monitoring mechanism or a national human rights institution; the Ministry of State serves as the government's point of contact for human rights matters. It oversees and operates government-affiliated media.
5	Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Industries https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/public-infrastructure/	Focuses on inclusive and climate-resilient development, and is responsible for constructing accessible public infrastructure, conducting accessibility audits of parks, and expanding transportation options that accommodate persons with disabilities.

Status of Coordinating Mechanism[11]

With the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act in September 2024, the Coordinating Committee of Persons with Disabilities was established as a national-level coordinating body. According to the Palau government's replies to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (November 2024) (hereinafter referred to as the "Reply to List of Issues")[12], the Coordinating Committee of Persons with Disabilities has not yet been established. In the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities' Concluding Observations (March 2025) (hereinafter referred to as the "Concluding Observations")[13], concern was expressed regarding the fact that the Coordinating Committee of Persons with Disabilities is not functioning, and a recommendation was made to ensure its timely operation of its coordination functions.

Name	Overview
Coordinating Committee of Persons with Disabilities[14]	A national-level Coordinating Committee of Persons with Disabilities was established pursuant to the Act on Persons with Disabilities (2024). The Minister of Health and Human Services serves as chairperson. Members include, (1) the Minister of Health

[11] Based on the Persons with Disabilities Act (2024, RPPL No. 11-36), the Replies to the List of Issues (2024), and the Concluding Observations (2025).
[12] Reply to List of Issues, CRPD/C/PLW/RQ/1
[13] Concluding Observations, CRPD/C/PLW/CO/1
[14] The National Disability Coordinating Council (NDCC), established by Presidential Decree No. 298 in 2011, was abolished,

	and Human Services (or a person designated by the Minister), (2) the Minister of Justice, (3) the Minister of Education, (4) the Minister of Finance, (5) the Commissioner of the Social Security Agency, (6) a representative of an organization of persons with disabilities (Organization of Persons with Disabilities; hereinafter referred to as "OPD") or support organizations, (7) a representative of the Association of Parents of Persons with Disabilities, (8) a representative of faith-based organizations, (9) a representative of the Governors' Association, and (10) other members appointed or approved as needed. Its duties are as follows: Coordination of programs and services related to persons with disabilities. This includes all government programs and services, as well as those provided by non-governmental organizations (hereinafter referred to as "NGOs") that wish to participate. 1) Reporting on the progress of programs and services for persons with disabilities 2) Formulation, publication, and updating of national policies regarding persons with disabilities 3) Recommending regulations concerning persons with disabilities to the Minister of Health and Social Welfare 4) Recommendation of legislation concerning persons with disabilities to the National Assembly (Olbiil Era Kelulau)

2-2. Laws and Policies on Disability

Article IV, Section 5 of the Constitution of Palau (enacted in 1981) states, "All citizens are equal under the law and have the right to equal protection."[15] Since ratifying the CRPD, the Government of Palau has focused on enacting and amending laws related to persons with disabilities in accordance with international standards. A prime example of this is the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act (2024, RPPL No. 11-36)[16].

Title	Persons with Disabilities Act, 2024, RPPL No. 11-36[17]
Year of enactment	2024
Overview	A new law aimed at strengthening comprehensive support for persons with disabilities. It provides for the establishment of the Coordinating Committee on Persons with Disabilities, the formulation of a National Policy on Persons with Disabilities, and the establishment of the Office on Persons with Disabilities (OPD). The Coordinating Committee on Persons with Disabilities, chaired by the

and a committee based on the Persons with Disabilities Act was established.

[15] https://www.palaulaw.gov.pw/constitution (Accessed: 20 April 2026)

[16] Based on the Concluding Observations (2025).

[17] https://static1.squarespace.com/static/662b1e3ae7d0d96d657e5654/t/67d0b861e8e2d853310edc9c/1741731939404/RPPL+11-36.pdf (Accessed: 20 April 2026)

	Minister of Health and Social Welfare and comprising members from relevant ministries and agencies as well as the OPD, is responsible for formulating the National Policy on Persons with Disabilities. The law mandates that the National Policy be reviewed every two years to evaluate its effectiveness and make necessary amendments. The Office on Persons with Disabilities (OPD) is established within the Ministry of Health and Human Service and is tasked with formulating programs and activities to implement the National Policy, operating a public service desk, and providing data and policy recommendations to the Coordinating Committee on Persons with Disabilities. As a measure for the two years following the enactment of this law, budget allocations for the launch of the Coordinating Committee on Persons with Disabilities and the OPD are explicitly stipulated.

Title	Disabled Persons' Anti-Discrimination Act (30 PNC[18]509)[19]
Year of enactment	2019
Overview	The Act defines a disability as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more person's major life activities." It prohibits employment discrimination and mandates the provision of accessible parking spaces and other accommodations for persons with disabilities in public buildings.

Title	Family Protection Act, 2012, RPPL No. 8–51[20]
Year of enactment	2012
Overview	It guarantees the provision of protective measures and effective remedies to all citizens to prevent domestic violence. There are no specific provisions targeting women and girls with disabilities. The working group for this law includes members from major OPDs.

Title	Programme and Services for Handicapped Children Act (RPPL 3–9, 1989) and Special Education Policies[21]
Year of enactment	1989, amended in 1996
Overview	In accordance with the U.S. IDEA Act, this law establishes the state's obligation to provide appropriate public education services free of charge to all children, including those with disabilities, from birth through age 21. It covers a wide range of disabilities and supports the inclusion of students in regular classrooms. The 1996 amendment

[18] Palau National Code

[19] https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/11/Palau_Disabled-Persons-Anti-discrimination-Act.pdf (Accessed: 20 April, 2026)

[20] https://v5.airtableusercontent.com/v3/u/53/53/1778004000000/lti6geNxifC2k2csVONGAg/4wyzrLD-t9QUnwRpUV0k6rHpMbjxwyyqNm4VFL1x16Mz7zh9yoeeKEsR1MrEoWtuUIDn29UCSuz-C5_lV73lhzBVufnnjJ__19eLrPxUnjmheCE1nW3mIQA27ccdlby3gXMdpypUc64xSEleCtBLKlf1Jg37AVqFPnHSOT7OYDE/y26dK_QpUUuzT56M26FhMRHXP071wCNiW0RAz9dARUs (Accessed: 20 April 2026)

[21] https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/palau.special-education-policy-2009.pdf (Accessed: 20 April 2026)

	requires the state government to provide appropriate accommodations and develop IEPs for all children, including those with physical or mental impairments.

Other major laws related to the rights of persons with disabilities include the following.

Title	Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act[22]
Year of enactment	2014
Overview	Implementation of skills development training programs to enable women with disabilities to access the labour market. Through this program, the Palauan civil society organization "Palau Entrepreneurs for Growth" provides training and support to residents, including persons with disabilities, to help them start small and medium-sized enterprises. As of August 2024, 149 of the 374 beneficiaries of the Severely Disabled Assistance Fund were women and girls.

Disability Policies

In Palau, a draft comprehensive national strategy on disability issues has been formulated. According to the Reply to the List of Issues to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2024), the draft is being revised in light of the enactment of the Disability Act in 2024.

2-3. Measures on Disability[23]

1) Healthcare

Status of Legislative Framework

According to the State Party's Report (2018), Article 6 of the Constitution of Palau stipulates that "the national government shall take positive action to promote the health and social welfare of the citizen through the provision of free or subsidized health care." The National Healthcare Financing Act (RPPL 8-14, 2010) establishes a National Health Insurance system. Additionally, the Behavioral Health Division has been established under the Ministry of Health to administer mental health referral programs for persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.

Health Status

In Palau, life expectancy has been at a relatively high level since 1990, 68 years for men and 63 years for women, and has been rising gradually. Life expectancy in 2050 is projected to be 72 years for men and 71 years for women[24]. A comparison of the leading causes of death in

[22] https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-11135/pdf/COMPS-11135.pdf (Accessed : 20 April 2026)

[23] Based on the State Party's Report (2018), Replies to the List of Issues (2024), and Concluding Observations (2025).

[24] https://www.healthdata.org/research-analysis/health-by-location/profiles/republic-palau, https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/PLAW-113publ128 (Accessed: 28 April 2026)

2013 and 2023 shows no change in the top three; ischemic heart disease ranks first, stroke second, and diabetes third. In 2023, lung cancer ranked fourth among causes of death, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) ranked fifth, indicating that non-communicable diseases have become established factors undermining health[25]. Infant and child mortality rates and malnutrition are on a downward trend, and there has been an improvement of more than 20% in deaths and disabilities caused by neonatal diseases when comparing 2013 and 2023[26].

Availability of Medical Services

Palau faces a severe and chronic shortage of physicians, and the only general hospital with inpatient facilities is the National Hospital[27]. The government focuses on primary care. When specialist care is required, patients must seek treatment within the region or abroad. According to the State Party's Report, for children with disabilities, the Ministry of Health (now the Ministry of Health and Human Services) operates a "Disability Card Policy." Based on an outpatient evaluation by a pediatrician and approval by the Director of Public Health, free medical examinations, treatment, and medications are provided. However, a comprehensive healthcare delivery system for persons with disabilities has not been established, and there is currently no coordination with the National Health Insurance program, which provides universal coverage.

Assistive devices, rehabilitation

According to the State Party's Report (2018), Palau does not have a rehabilitation center for the different types of disabilities, including physical, sensory, intellectual, and psychosocial disabilities. Over the next few years, the government plans to prioritize community-based rehabilitation. The Ministry of Health and Human Services addresses "acquired physical disability" through the physical therapy sections of hospitals. Regarding psychosocial disabilities, the Behavioral Health Division is implementing a Psychosocial Rehabilitation program[28]. Participation in habilitation and rehabilitation services, as well as government-provided programs, is voluntary and based on dialogue with key stakeholders. According to the Reply to List of Issues 2024, a Rehabilitation Services Division has been established within the Ministry of Health and Human Services, and standard mobility aids such as walkers, crutches, canes, and wheelchairs are available. Staff members are trained to assess and prescribe wheelchairs and to adjust them to fit patients. However, there are no established

[25] *Ibid.*
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] Belau National Hospital, located in the former capital of Koror. Even after the capital was relocated to Markyok in 2006, Koror remains the largest economic center, home to 70 % of the population.
[28] A program designed to help unemployed workers and others find employment by providing vocational skills training and on-the-job training tailored to local needs. It includes training in life skills and social skills, as well as peer support.

local wheelchair service providers or retailers capable of providing comprehensive procurement support. Specialized wheelchairs are currently procured from overseas or received as donations.

In light of this situation, the Concluding Observations recommend the following:

- Ensure that comprehensive and cross-sectoral habitation and rehabilitation services, programs, and technology within their communities.
- Ensure that all rehabilitation equipment, assistive devices, mobility aids, and services, including their repair, are based on individual requirements, to promote the maximum independence and social inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Health insurance

The National Health Insurance system was established under the 2010 National Healthcare Financing Act. National Health Insurance is funded by shared contributions from employers and employees, as well as the government budget, and is administered by the Palau Social Security Administration [29][30] . The Social Security Administration audits companies' contribution payments to ensure they are made appropriately. Persons with disabilities and seniors aged 60 and older are exempt from paying contributions. Coverage includes inpatient treatment at Belau National Hospital, Palau's only general hospital; medical treatment off-island; medical transport for approved off-island referrals; and preventive healthcare services, such as annual health checkups, at medical institutions within Palau and at approved off-island facilities. More than 90% of Palau's citizens are enrolled in the health insurance system[31].

2) Education

Status of Legislative Framework

According to the State Party's Report, Article 4 of the Constitution of Palau stipulates that the government shall provide free and compulsory education to its citizens. Free public education is provided by the government from first through twelfth grade, and attendance is compulsory for children aged 6 to 17. Children with disabilities are guaranteed the right to a free and appropriate public education in accordance with the U.S. IDEA[32] and Palau's Programme and Services for Handicapped Children Act (RPPL 3-9, 1989, as amended in 1996). The educational

[29] Social Security Administration (https://ropssa.pw/index.html) (Accessed: 28 April 2026).

[30] To address rising medical costs and ensure the efficient operation of the health insurance system, a bill is currently under deliberation that would separate the operation and management of the Medical Fund, the primary source of funding for the health insurance system, from the Social Insurance Agency (https://islandtimes.org/bill-seeks-to-separate-health-care-fund-from-social-security/) (Accessed: 28 April 2026).

[31] https://www.pihoa.org/palau/ (Accessed: 28 April 2026).

[32] https://sites.ed.gov/idea/

program is designed for children and youth with disabilities aged 3 to 21 and is operated with grants from the United States. It is mandatory to develop an IEP for all children and youth with disabilities, and the government is obligated to ensure that public education is provided with appropriate accommodations.

Enrollment status

In Palau, compulsory education through grade 12 is provided free of charge, and the percentage of people who have never attended school is low. According to the results of the 2015 census[33], 3% of the total population aged 5 and older had never attended school, and the gross enrollment rate for primary and secondary education was nearly 100% for both males and females. On the other hand, the enrollment rate for persons with disabilities is lower than that of persons without disabilities. Enrollment rates for persons with disabilities in preschool, secondary, and higher education are lower than those for persons without disabilities[34]. In secondary education, the enrollment rate for persons without disabilities is 41.7%, compared to 30.7% for persons with disabilities. The percentage of persons without disabilities who have never attended school is 2.7%, whereas the percentage for persons with disabilities is significantly higher at 12.1%. Regarding literacy, while the literacy rate for persons without disabilities is nearly 100%, the literacy rate for persons with disabilities shows a significant disparity: reading proficiency is 51%, and writing proficiency is 48%. In Palau's remote islands, the literacy rate for persons with disabilities is even lower, at 25%. Regarding higher education completion rates, while the completion rate for persons without disabilities is 42.5%, that for persons with disabilities stands at only 8.2%. There are also challenges for persons with disabilities in continuing their studies and completing higher education.

Inclusive education

In Palau, inclusive education is not explicitly stipulated in laws or policies. According to the State Party's Report, "[…] All schools have to be inclusive, which is to place students with disabilities in general education classrooms with their non-disabled peers. […] individual student's needs are addressed by an IEP team consisting of parents, special education teachers, regular teachers, school principal, and other related service providers." Currently, the Ministry of Education is promoting inclusive education by providing special education programs. According to the State Party's Report, under the aforementioned U.S. IDEA and Programme and Services for Handicapped Children Act, all schools are required to ensure

[33] https://www.palaugov.pw/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/2020_Census-of-Population-Housing-and-Agriculture-Basic-Tables.pdf (Accessed: 26 April 2026)

[34] Only in primary education did the enrollment rate for students with disabilities exceed that of students without disabilities. Based on these results, the United Nations Children's Fund (hereinafter "UNICEF") has analyzed that challenges exist in the enrollment of children with disabilities during the transition from secondary to higher education, as well as in higher education and beyond.

that the necessary instructional materials are available and to provide support accompanied by individualized reasonable accommodations to ensure inclusion in education. However, the Concluding Observations express concern that access to educational services is limited, particularly for children with disabilities living in rural areas and on remote islands, and recommend that the government develop programs that respect the abilities of children in accordance with their developmental stages and ensure that children with disabilities can access inclusive education on an equal footing with other children.

Special school

Special education is provided by the Bureau of Curriculum and Instruction, Ministry of Education through special education programs supported by the United States[35]. Schools participating in the program are staffed with teachers assigned to the program. According to the State Party's Report, children requiring special support are defined as individuals aged 0 to 21 who, due to a long-term physical, developmental, behavioral, or emotional condition, require special support in the form of education and related services beyond what is required by most other children. Approximately 300 children are registered with the Ministry of Health and Human Services. In the 2016–17 school year, 87 children participated in the Special Education Program. Of these, 52 were male (ages 4–21) and 35 were female (ages 5–21). The breakdown by type of disability is shown in the table below.

Table 2 Types of Disabilities Among Special Education Program Participants

Type of Disability	Males (persons)	Females (persons)	Total (persons)
Autism	4	1	5
Hearing Impairment	1	1	2
Intellectual Disability	2	2	4
Multiple Disabilities	4	3	7
Orthopedic Impairment	1	1	2
Other Health Impairments	2	2	4
Specific Learning Disabilities	32	20	52
Speech & Language Disability	5	3	8
Visual Impairment	1	2	3
Total	52	35	87

Source: Prepared by the study team based on the State Party's Report

Students, parents, and staff participating in the program are required to undergo ongoing training and professional capacity development.

The Concluding Observations (2025) raise the following concerns:

- Insufficient provision of reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities
- Insufficient teacher training and a lack of braille, sign language, and accessible

[35] https://www.palauschools.org/?p=se (Accessed: 26 April 2026)

materials and methods, which are rights under inclusive education
- Lack of accessible teaching materials and adapted learning environments
- Lack of physical accessibility to schools
- Barriers to advancing to higher education

3) Gender

Status of Legislative Framework

Palau is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (hereinafter referred to as "CEDAW") and is working to formulate a national gender mainstreaming policy. According to the State Party's Report, this policy is intended to align national plans for implementing the government's international and regional commitments regarding gender equality and women's empowerment, and to include women and children with disabilities within its scope. According to the Reply to List of Issues, this policy is currently being reviewed and updated by the Ministry of State[36] under the new administration. The current "Family Protection Act" (2012) aims to provide protection and effective remedies to prevent acts of domestic violence. By expanding and strengthening the capacity of police officers to support victims of domestic violence, and by enforcing the law rigorously and applying appropriate legal penalties for acts of domestic violence and abuse, the law treats domestic violence as a serious crime. However, the law does not contain specific provisions targeting women and girls with disabilities. OMEKESANG, the leading OPD in Palau, is a member of the Family Protection Act Working Group and contributes to mainstreaming the concerns of persons with disabilities.

Status of women with disabilities

Although Palau's Constitution stipulates that fundamental human rights should be guaranteed to both men and women, gender inequality persists. Regarding employment, according to the 2020 census, 77% of men are employed, compared with 65% of women. The unemployment rate for women aged 25 and above is twice that of men (1.4% versus 0.7%). This disparity is recognized as stemming from women's roles in family caregiving and child-rearing. Although data on the employment of persons with disabilities broken down by gender is limited, the gender gap is even wider. According to the 2015 Census, 12.9% of men with disabilities were employed, compared to only 5.3% of women with disabilities. The labour force participation rate is 18.7 % for men with disabilities, compared to 9.5 % for women with disabilities. According to the State Party's Report, one in four women has experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner at some point in her life.

[36] https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/state/ (Accessed: April 26, 2026)

In light of this situation, the Concluding Observations recommend the following:

- Conduct a study on the situation of women and girls with disabilities, collect gender-disaggregated data, identify the specific situation and their needs, and adopt strategies, policies, and programs; promote their independence and full participation in society, and achieve their empowerment and inclusion in all areas.
- Mainstream the rights of women and girls with disabilities into the legal system, mainstream a gender perspective into policies and programs, and ensure their consultation and participation.
- Develop and adopt awareness-raising campaigns and educational programs throughout society, and ensure their involvement in all public decision-making processes.

4) Vocational Training and Employment

Status of Legislative Framework

The Disabled Person's Anti-Discrimination Act (2019) prohibits discrimination in employment. The Act allows individuals to file lawsuits in court seeking damages for violations (including punitive damages of up to USD1,000). It mandates the implementation of affirmative action measures for persons with disabilities seeking employment as federal civil servants. In addition, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, expands employment opportunities for persons with disabilities by strengthening vocational rehabilitation, increasing funding for vocational training, and prioritizing competitive and supported employment. This is expected to ensure access to career services, assistive technology, and individualized support at local job centers.

Status of Employment

According to the 2015 Census, 8.1% of persons with disabilities aged 15 and above are employed, compared to 61.2% of persons without disabilities. In the 2020 Census, 10% of persons with disabilities aged 15 and older were in the labour force, compared with 75% of persons without disabilities. These data indicate that persons with disabilities have limited opportunities to participate in the labour market and are unlikely to have the same opportunities as persons without disabilities.

Vocational Training

Students in special education schools and those who have transitioned to general education may, if they wish, enroll in Career and Technical Education (hereinafter referred to as "CTE") programs [37] while attending high school. According to the State Party's Report, this

[37] https://pcc.palau.edu/academics/ (Accessed: 26 April 2026)

educational program is a career-oriented initiative involving direct participation by local employers. It aims to enhance motivation to participate in vocational activities and, in addition to earning a high school diploma, to prepare students to obtain industry-recognized certifications and to advance to related college degree programs[38]. The CTE program is administered by Palau Community College (hereinafter referred to as "PCC")[39], which operates under the Ministry of Education. PCC is an accredited educational institution that receives federal grants from the U.S. Department of Education. PCC and the Ministry of Education are also promoting vocational education programs for women and girls with disabilities. They have been conducting capacity-building training for women with disabilities to facilitate their access to the labour market.

The Palau Entrepreneurs Association for Growth, a civil society organization in Palau, provides training and support to local residents, including persons with disabilities, to help them start small and medium-sized enterprises. Palau Parents Empowered (hereinafter "PPE") provides vocational skills training and training on IEPs for young persons with disabilities. As a resource center, it provides internet access and training as part of preparations for life after high school.

In light of these circumstances, the Concluding Observations recommend the following:

- Develop and implement a clear, comprehensive strategy across the private and public sectors to promote employment opportunities in the labour market, ensuring that persons with disabilities receive equal remuneration for work of equal value. In an inclusive work environment, establish effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure implementation,
- Recognize in law and in policies the denial of reasonable accommodation as a form of workplace discrimination,
- Raise awareness among employers about the rights of persons with disabilities and inclusive and accessible work environments,
- Establish affirmative action measures to stimulate greater employment among persons with disabilities, in particular for women with disabilities.

5) Social Security, Social Service for Persons with Disabilities

Status of Legislative Framework

Palau's social security system was established to ensure a certain level of protection for the elderly and persons with disabilities, and the Social Security Act (1987, RPPL 2-29; amended in 1991 by RPPL 3-64) provides for the protection and support of socially vulnerable groups.

[38] Students are enrolled in an integrated curriculum that requires them to take at least three general education courses and one vocational and technical course. This includes job shadowing in 10th grade, career mentoring in 11th grade, and career internships in 12th grade.

[39] https://pcc.palau.edu/ (Accessed: 26 April 2026)

The Social Security Act defines a disability as "an inability to engage in any substantial gainful employment by reason of any medically determined physical or mental impairment which can be expected to result in death or which has lasted, or can be expected to last, for a continuous period of not less than twelve (12) months." Although this definition differs from that in the Persons with Disabilities Act enacted in 2024, as mentioned earlier, a common definition has not yet been established across all relevant laws. The Social Security Act provides for the payment of monthly benefits to persons with disabilities. The Palau Social Security Administration, established under the Social Security Act, provides disability benefits to eligible persons with disabilities. Eligibility for disability benefits administered by the Social Security Administration is limited to insured persons with taxable income who have paid insurance premiums. Eligibility is defined as individuals who, due to a mental or physical disability, are unable to engage in substantial paid employment for at least 12 months.

In 2002, the Palau Severely Disabled Assistance Fund was established by a Senate bill (RPPL 6–26) to provide support to severely disabled individuals who are not employed. At the time of the State Party's Report (2018), support for persons with severe disabilities was administered by the Bureau of Youth Applied Arts & Career, which was then under the Ministry of Community and Culture; however, at the time of this study, it is administered by the Division of Human Services, the Ministry of Health and Human Services. According to the Reply to the List of Issues, the details of support as of 2024 are as follows:

- Eligibility is limited to individuals living at home who have severe physical, mental, or emotional disabilities requiring 24-hour care and supervision by a third party, as well as wheelchair users (defined as individuals with severe physical, mental, or emotional disabilities who require a wheelchair to move from one place to another).
- The benefit amounts were increased in 2024; individuals living at home who require 24-hour care will receive $250 per month, and wheelchair users will receive $200 per month. Individuals with visual impairments diagnosed as clinically and legally irreparable will also receive $200 per month.
- If it is determined that funds are available for this program, the Minister in charge may increase the monthly allowance.
- A committee appointed by the President is delegated the responsibility to screen applicants, do home visits, and provide an annual report to the National Congress and the President's Office.

Service Provision

According to the State Party's Report (2018), there are 253 recipients of benefits provided by the Palau Severely Disabled Assistance Fund, of whom 143 are men, and 110 are women.

By disability category, there are 218 persons with disabilities requiring 24-hour care at home (123 men and 95 women), 26 wheelchair users (13 men and 13 women), and 9 persons with visual impairments (7 men and 2 women). By age group, there were 24 persons aged 1–9 (14 males, 10 females), 13 persons aged 10–14 (4 males, 9 females), 54 persons aged 15–34 (31 males, 23 females),95 persons aged 35–54 (57 men and 38 women), and 65 persons aged 55 and older (35 men and 30 women). According to the 2024 survey responses, 374 persons were receiving benefits that year. In light of these circumstances, the Concluding Observations recommend the following:

- Strengthen the social protection system to guarantee an adequate standard of living for persons with disabilities and to cover additional disability-related expenses, in particular for those who require more intensive support,
- Review the provisions concerning the level of disability pensions and take measures to increase the amount.

6) Transportation and Urban Development (including accessible urban planning)

Status of Legislative Framework

Palau's Disabled Person's Anti-Discrimination Act (2019) contains provisions regarding access for persons with disabilities to central government buildings. Section 508 stipulates that at least one designated parking space must be provided near the main entrance of each government building. Additionally, for newly constructed central government buildings, there must be at least one entrance wide enough for wheelchair access, a wheelchair ramp providing access to the first floor, and one men's and one women's restroom, each equipped with handrails at the entrance. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Industry[40] is responsible for these measures. The Palau National Infrastructure Investment Plan 2021–2030[41] has been formulated to construct accessible public infrastructure, conduct accessibility audits of parks, and expand transportation options that accommodate persons with disabilities. In addition, the "Complete Streets" initiative, led by the Palau Office of Climate Change, Koror Complete Streets Pilot Project, is designed and operated to ensure safe access for pedestrians of all ages, including persons with disabilities, as well as cyclists, motorists, and public transportation users. According to the Reply to List of Issues, the Ministry of Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the OPD, conducts accessibility audits of schools and public buildings. As a result of these audits, the number of parking spaces at public buildings and schools has increased. Public parks are equipped with accessible restrooms for persons with disabilities that can be used by both men and women.

[40] https://www.palaugov.pw/executive-branch/ministries/public-infrastructure/ (Accessed: 26 April 2026)
[41] https://www.palaugov.pw/wp-content/uploads/National-Infrastructure-Investment-Plan-NIIP-2021.pdf

However, the State Party's Report states that "the provision of assistive devices, rehabilitation centers, and hearing aids is insufficient, limiting accessibility," indicating that the government is aware of these accessibility limitations.

Accessibility Improvement

According to the Replies to the List of Issues, the Bureau of Public Safety, Ministry of Justice, is issuing emblems to eligible persons with disabilities and stepping up enforcement against the unauthorized use of accessible parking spaces (parking spaces for persons with disabilities). Fines are imposed for unauthorized parking. There is no accessible public transportation, and only one government-owned accessible van is operated by the Bureau of Public Health of the Ministry of Health and Human Services. This van is used only when requested by users or patients of the relevant division or the rehabilitation department. The Ministry of Health and Human Services is working to improve accessibility to medical facilities by renovating hospitals and community clinics and installing accessible parking spaces. In the field of education and vocational training, the PCC is working to ensure that students with disabilities have physical access to campuses by installing ramps and elevators and improving infrastructure, including accessible restrooms.

In light of these circumstances, the Concluding Observations recommend the following:

- Develop a comprehensive accessibility plan for transportation and public facilities.
- Ensure affordable and high-quality mobility aids, assistive devices, assistive technologies, and services (including accessible transportation and infrastructure) are available.
- Implement incentives for the purchase of assistive devices for persons with disabilities; apply tax and customs duty exemptions; ensure the affordability of vehicles and assistive devices; and amend relevant tax laws.

7) Information Accessibility

According to the State Party's Report, due to a lack of technical resources, information is not provided in accessible formats such as braille and sign language interpretation, making access to information a significant challenge. According to the Reply to List of Issues, there are no policies or specific measures to promote equal access to transportation and information and communication technology (hereinafter referred to as "ICT"), nor are there any policies or measures to promote the use of braille, sign language, or easy-to-read formats. An ICT policy has been formulated to further ensure access to mass media for persons with disabilities. However, the establishment of a working group to implement this policy has not yet been approved.

In light of this situation, the Concluding Observations recommend the following:

- Legally recognize Palauan Sign Language as an official language, promote access to and use of sign language in all areas of life, and work to train and secure qualified sign language interpreters.
- Revise regulations to ensure that persons with various disabilities can access public information and communications, and allocate sufficient funding for the development, dissemination, and use of accessible communication formats, including Braille, deaf-blind interpretation (tactile sign language), sign language, easy-to-read versions, plain language, audio descriptions, video transcripts, captions, tactile formats, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) methods.
- Develop strategies equipped with benchmarks, indicators, and sufficient resources, and establish monitoring mechanisms to ensure that public information, including websites, television, and other media formats, is accessible to persons with disabilities.

8) Disaster risk management

In Palau, the National Emergency Management Office (NEMO)[42], under the Office of the Vice President, is responsible for effectively coordinating disaster risk reduction activities in collaboration with the working groups of the National Emergency Council, all government agencies, various sectors, NGOs, churches, the private sector, community organizations, and local partners. The National Disaster Risk Management Framework[43] is designed to ensure that vulnerable communities have the knowledge and understanding of potential hazards and risks, enabling them to take appropriate actions to save lives and protect property and the environment. According to the Reply to List of Issues, the International Organization for Migration (hereinafter referred to as "IOM") has been assisting in the development of the National Disaster Risk Management Framework and, in collaboration with the OPD, conducted a mapping of persons with disabilities in Palau. This mapping has enabled the government to gain a deeper understanding of the needs of persons with disabilities, and early warning information is now delivered to them in accessible formats through visual aids, audio messages, and assistive technologies tailored to specific disabilities. In September 2024, OMEKESANG of the OPD, in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Human Services, released guidelines on disaster risk reduction that are inclusive of persons with disabilities.

In light of these developments, the Concluding Observations recommend the following:

- Through representative organizations of persons with disabilities, and in close consultation and with the active involvement of persons with disabilities, improve the accessibility of warning information for persons with all types of disabilities, particularly

[42] https://www.palaugov.pw/the-national-emergency-management-office/ (Accessed: 26 April 2026)
[43] https://www.palaugov.pw/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/FINALIZED-NDRMF_2016.pdf (Accessed: 26 April 2026)

those with visual and hearing impairments, deafblindness, intellectual disabilities, and mental disabilities, and ensure that representatives of persons with disabilities participate in the National Emergency Committee and are incorporated into the National Disaster Risk Management Framework (2016–2030).

3. International Treaties and International Cooperation

3-1. Status of Implementation Following Ratification of the CRPD[44]

The Government of Palau ratified the CRPD on June 11, 2013[45]. The government submitted its initial report to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2018. Following a constructive dialogue, the Committee issued its Concluding Observations in 2025. The deadline for submitting the next State Party's Report is July 2031.

3-2. Status of Implementation of the Marrakesh Treaty

The Government of Palau has not acceded to the Marrakesh Treaty. The parallel report[46] recommends using the treaty framework as a guideline for formulating national policies specifically aimed at bridging the accessibility gap for persons with visual impairments.

3-3. Initiatives in the Disability Sector within SDG-Related Policies

According to the United Nations Statistics Division's Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter referred to as "SDGs") indicator database, for indicator 4.a.1 "Proportion of schools with appropriate facilities and learning materials for students with disabilities", the rate as of 2023 improved from 84.2% in 2020 to reach 100%[47].

The Government of Palau conducted Voluntary National Reviews (hereinafter referred to as "VNRs") in 2019 and 2024, in which national governments report to the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on their progress toward achieving the SDGs and on policy implementation. The process of drafting the Second VNR Report (2024) notes the participation of diverse stakeholders, including OPDs and civil society organizations, as stipulated in Presidential Decree No. 483 (2023). The report explicitly states the need to strengthen social protection for vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, in order to achieve the 2030 goals. References to persons with disabilities are included in the assessment of progress toward each target.

3-4. Ratification of and Initiatives regarding Other International Treaties related to Disabilities and Development

The Government of Palau signed CEDAW in 2011 but has not yet ratified it. There are no references to CEDAW in the Concluding Observations or the parallel report.

The Government of Palau ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1995.

---

[44] https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx (Accessed: 20 April 2026)
[45] It has not ratified the Optional Protocol.
[46] BANGO and Partner Organizations (2025)
[47] https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/plw (Accessed: 20 April 2026)

The Government of Palau has not ratified ILO Convention No. 159[48], an international treaty that calls on states to formulate and implement national policies to ensure that persons with disabilities receive appropriate vocational rehabilitation and have equal access to employment opportunities.

3-5. International Cooperation on Disability[49]

- The Government of Japan[50]

<Grant Aid>

- The Project for the Reconstruction of Minato Bridge (2024–2030)
- Economic and Social Development Plan (Provision of Medical Equipment) (2021)
- Strengthening Immunization Programs in Pacific Island Countries (in collaboration with UNICEF and the World Health Organization) (2021)
- Economic and Social Development Program (Support for Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 through the Provision of Health and Medical Equipment) (2020)
- Economic and Social Development Program (Support for Overcoming Vulnerability to Natural Disasters, etc., through the Provision of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Equipment) (2020)

<Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Project>

- Project for the Renovation of Angaur Elementary School Building / Angaur Elementary School (2025)
- Judiciary Building in Melekeok / Bureau of Public Works, Ministry of Public Infrastructure & Industries (2023, 2025)
- The Project for Procurement of School Bus for Airai Elementary School / Airai Elementary School (2023)
- The Project for Provision of Waste Management Vehicle for Peleliu State / Peleliu State Government (2023)
- The project for renovating Ngardmau Elementary School Building / Ngardmau Elementary School (2023)
- The project for renovating George B.Harris Elementary School Buildings /George B.Harris Elementary School (2023)
- The Project for Reconstructing Cafeteria for Meyuns Elementary School / Meyuns Elementary School (2022)
- The Project for Constructing the New Emergency Relief Supplies Storage Warehouse and Training Center of the Palau Red Cross Society / Palau Red Cross Society (2021)

[48] Convention on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Persons with Disabilities), which entered into force in 1985.
[49] Project names are listed exactly as they appear in the original text. However, this does not apply in cases where there is no English name or the English name is unknown.
[50] Based on the JICA Country-Specific Project List (https://www.jica.go.jp/activities/schemes/partner/kusanone/country/project/palau.html) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Country-Specific Commitment Information (https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/gaiko/oda/data/zyoukyou.html). (Accessed: 15 April 2026)

- The Project for the Procurement of Radio Broadcasting Equipment to Division of Media and Information Services / Ministry of State (2021)
- The Project for Facilitating Hand-Wash Stations to Schools in Koror and Airai States / Ministry of Education (2020)
- The Project for Facilitating Hand-Wash Stations to Schools in Babeldaob and Outlying States / Ministry of Education (2020)
- The Project for Procurement of Fire Truck and Ambulance to the Republic of Palau / The Division of Fire and Rescue, Ministry of Justice (2019)
- The Project for Renovating Senior Citizens Center / Ministry of Community and Cultural Affairs (2019)
- The Project for Procurement of ICU Vital Signs Monitors for Belau National Hospital / BNH Bureau of Hospital & Clinical Services (2018)
- The Project for Enhancing Community Resilience in Palau / Palau Red Cross Society (2018)
- The Project for Improving Community Health Care of Belau National Hospital / Belau National Hospital (2016)
- The Project for Improving Environmental Health for Kayangel / Kayangel State (2016)

< Grant Assistance for Japanese NGO Projects >

- Project on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) Disposal, Technology Transfer and Safety Monitoring in the Republic of Palau (Years 1–3) (2022–2024)
- Provision of Mobile Medical Clinics and Medical Examination on a Hospital Ship, Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases (Phase 1) (2021–2023)
- Work on Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) in the Republic of Palau (Phase 1-3)
- Explosive Remnants of War (ERW) Disposal in the Sea of the Republic of Palau (Years 1–3) (2016–2018)

<Dispatch of Volunteers>

- Physical therapists, etc.

• Other Donors

<International Organizations>

United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDF) / Multi-Donor Program

- Inclusive Learning & Skills (2023–2027)

IOM (with financial support from the United States)

- Program to Strengthen Disaster Preparedness and Response in the Republic of Palau (2022–2024)[51]

Asian Development Bank

[51] https://roasiapacific.iom.int/news/iom-and-partners-kick-program-strengthen-disaster-preparedness-and-response-republic-palau (Accessed: 30 April 2026)

- COVID-19 Response for Affected Poor and Vulnerable Groups Project (2021–2026)[52]

<Bilateral Aid>

U.S. Government

- Maternal and Child Health Program (2011–2024)
- Grant Programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2015–2024)

<International/Regional NGOs>

The Pacific Community[53]

- Locally-Led Programs of Work to Advance Gender Equality in Palau (2025)[54]

[52] https://www.adb.org/projects/54196-002/main (Accessed: 30 April 2026)
[53] https://spc.int/ (Accessed: 28 April 2026)
[54] https://islandtimes.org/palau-advances-gender-equality-with-new-tools-and-partnerships/ (Accessed: 28 April 2026)

4. Disability-related Organizations and Activities[55]

4-1. Organizations of Persons with Disabilities

Name of Organization	Overview
OMEKESANG https://www.facebook.com/OMEKESANG.Palau/	It was established in 1997. It is the only OPD in Palau. It was reestablished in early 2010 and became an associate member of the Pacific Forum on Disability. It is a member of the Human Rights Working Group and works closely with PPE and government agencies to support their activities. It was a key organization that assisted the Palauan government in drafting the section on persons with disabilities in its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report. It submitted a parallel report on the CRPD. It is a member of Asia-Pacific DPO United, Disabled Persons International, and the International Disability Alliance.

4-2. Disability Support Organizations

Name of Organization	Overview
Palau Parents Empowered (PPE) https://sites.google.com/site/palauparents/	Established in 2010 in conjunction with the implementation of a U.S. federal government program by the Palau Ministry of Education. It was recognized as an NGO in 2011. The program was a five-year initiative designed to support parents of individuals with disabilities. Since its establishment, the organization has continued its activities to support parents of individuals with disabilities up to the age of 26. Based on the individual strengths of students who have completed special education programs, the organization is engaged in discussions with the Palau Community College (PCC) and government agencies to facilitate their transition to college or employment after high school graduation. It is also a member of the Youth Service Team, which focuses on young persons with and without disabilities who face challenges in schools and local communities. Member agencies include the Judiciary, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Community and Culture, and the team conducts outreach activities to all schools and communities in Palau.

[55] Compiled based on parallel reports, the State Party's Reports, and the websites of various organizations.

5. Barriers and Needs Faced by Persons with Disabilities[56]

5-1. Barriers to and Needs regarding Healthcare Services

In Palau, access to health care services is limited for all citizens, including persons with disabilities. A national health insurance program was established in 2010, and persons with disabilities are exempt from paying insurance premiums. However, there is only one general hospital in Palau, and when specialized treatment or care is required, patients often have no choice but to seek care abroad. For children with disabilities, the Ministry of Health and Human Services operates a "Disability Card Policy" that provides free medical examinations, treatment, and medications; however, this system is not integrated with the universal health insurance program. There are no rehabilitation facilities tailored to specific disabilities, and a comprehensive healthcare delivery system for persons with disabilities has not been established. In particular, it has been pointed out that when women and girls with disabilities, as well as those with mental and intellectual disabilities, seek services, they face barriers such as inaccessible medical facilities and information, a lack of reasonable accommodations, and prejudice against persons with disabilities by healthcare professionals. It has been noted that there is a shortage of accessible healthcare-related information for persons with disabilities. The parallel report[57] recommends revising the health insurance system to address the specific needs of persons with disabilities and evaluating the status of hospital renovations to improve healthcare accessibility.

Based on the above, the primary needs include establishing a comprehensive healthcare system for persons with disabilities, guaranteeing access to healthcare, providing services tailored to individual needs, institutionalizing reasonable accommodations, and improving data management.

5-2. Barriers and Needs regarding Education

In the field of education, domestic laws and policy frameworks related to ensuring education for children with disabilities still use discriminatory terminology[58] and contain elements that promote segregated education, resulting in a situation that does not fully comply with the Convention. While many children with disabilities receive special education, there is a lack of clear data. According to the State Party's Report, in special education programs funded by U.S. government grants, there are approximately 300 persons with disabilities registered in the program, but only about 30 % of those registered actually

[56] Based on two parallel reports submitted to the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2025 (BANGO and Partner Organizations, The Centre for Voters Initiative and Action) and one parallel report submitted in 2022 (OMEKESANG).

[57] BANGO and Partner Organizations (2025)

[58] The terms "handicapped children," "children with severe problems," and "severe impairment" are used in current legislation.

participate. The low enrollment and completion rates among children with disabilities indicate that many children are not enrolled in school or drop out after enrolling. The parallel report[59] calls for improving school accessibility, implementing awareness programs to overcome prejudice, collecting data on the enrollment status and educational outcomes of children with disabilities to improve inclusive education, and, in particular, increasing financial assistance to ensure that children with intellectual disabilities are included in and can participate in the education system.

Based on the above, there is a need for appropriate legislative amendments, the thorough implementation of reasonable accommodations, enhanced accessibility, the promotion of inclusive education, and the facilitation of access to higher education.

5-3. Barriers and Needs Related to Employment

Although the Disabled Person's Anti-Discrimination Act (2019) was enacted, there is no comprehensive employment support policy for persons with disabilities, and no significant improvements have been reported in their equal access to employment opportunities. Statistics and information on employment for persons with disabilities are lacking, making it difficult to ascertain the actual situation; however, the unemployment rate among persons with disabilities remains high. It has also been pointed out that the refusal to provide reasonable accommodations is not recognized as a form of workplace discrimination under the Disabled Persons' Anti-Discrimination Act. According to the parallel report[60]. The Act does not include provisions regarding reasonable accommodations for employees with disabilities. Laws and personnel policies permit the dismissal of employees on the grounds of "mental incapacity." Support for the transition from education to employment, tailored to the life cycle of persons with disabilities, is provided only through a limited number of programs.

The parallel report[61] calls for the development programs to reduce the unemployment rate among persons with disabilities, the strengthening of public-private partnerships to promote an inclusive workplace environment, and the expansion of employment opportunities for persons with disabilities in the public sector. Another parallel report[62] calls for the introduction of penalties for employers and organizations that discriminate against persons with disabilities, the recording and collection of statistical data, and the formulation of plans to ensure equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Based on the above, key needs include the formulation and implementation of comprehensive employment policies for persons with disabilities, the legal codification of

[59] BANGO and Partner Organizations (2025)
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] OMEKESANG (2022)

reasonable accommodations, and the establishment of a monitoring system; the enhancement of consistent support from education to employment; and the implementation of awareness-raising programs regarding equal access to employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

5-4. Barriers and Needs Related to Mobility

Efforts are being made to improve accessibility regarding mobility for persons with disabilities through the enactment of the Disabled Person's Anti-Discrimination Act (2019) and the formulation of Palau's National Infrastructure Investment Plan. However, accessibility remains limited due to a shortage of assistive devices, rehabilitation centers, and hearing aids. Although initiatives are underway to make buildings accessible and improve accessibility within them, the situation is not yet adequate. According to the parallel report[63], government efforts have focused on providing wheelchairs to persons with mobility impairments. To enhance accessibility and independence for persons with disabilities, a more comprehensive approach would be to incorporate assistive technologies that address a wider range of needs, such as devices for hearing, visual, and cognitive impairments, into government programs. Another parallel report[64] notes that resources and facilities for assistive technology services within Palau are limited, and materials and equipment are outdated. In many cases, these services are funded by international donors. No visual assistive devices or related services were identified.

Based on the above, it is necessary to provide technical training to enable the design of systems and the delivery of services that improve and ensure mobility accessibility for all persons with disabilities.

5-5. Barriers to and Needs regarding Information Access

In the area of information access, Palauan Sign Language is not legally recognized as an official language, and there is a lack of training in its use. There is a lack of legal measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can seek and receive information in accessible formats, as well as a shortage of information provision and communication support for persons with disabilities, particularly those with hearing, visual, and intellectual disabilities. In addition, it has been pointed out that benchmarks, indicators, and strategies should be formulated, and monitoring mechanisms established, to ensure that persons with disabilities can access public information and communications (including information via television programs, websites, and other media services). The parallel report points out that restrictions on access to ICT and

[63] BANGO and Partner Organizations (2025)
[64] OMEKESANG (2022)

high prices are exacerbating the digital divide, limiting access to vital information, services[65], and opportunities. To bridge this gap, it is essential to establish a clear timeline for policy formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. It is imperative to provide accessible public information, ensure the availability and affordability of assistive technologies, and guarantee that ICT services are designed with universal design principles.

In light of the above, there is a need to develop a legal framework that enables persons with disabilities to access information in accessible formats and to build a flexible support system that addresses their individual needs.

5-6. Barriers and Needs regarding Gender

In the area of gender, women and girls with disabilities face discrimination and prejudice due to intersectionality, as well as the risk of violence. Regarding employment opportunities, there is a significant disparity compared to men with disabilities, and women with disabilities are not gaining opportunities for social participation through employment. The participation of women and girls with disabilities is lacking in decision-making processes at all levels. Although the Government of Palau is working to formulate a national gender mainstreaming policy, a gender perspective is lacking in relevant laws and policies, including the current Family Protection Act. Additionally, gender-disaggregated data is insufficient across all sectors, making it difficult to accurately assess gender-related issues. The parallel report[66] points out that the incorporation of gender mainstreaming policies to address the specific challenges faced by women and girls with disabilities remains limited; the current Family Protection Act merely makes a brief reference to disabilities, lacks actionable measures, and leaves significant gaps in its scope of application. Another parallel report notes that women with disabilities tend to be engaged in domestic work, and that only 9.5% of the female population with disabilities is economically active, compared to 58.1% of women without disabilities. This disparity highlights challenges that must be addressed to ensure women with disabilities have opportunities to participate in economic activities.

In light of the above, the key needs for safeguarding the rights of women and girls with disabilities include incorporating accessibility and awareness-raising into gender equality initiatives, revising the current Family Protection Act, and strengthening advocacy efforts.

[65] BANGO and Partner Organizations (2025)

[66] *Ibid.*

6. References

Centre for Voters Initiative & Action (2025) NGO Report on Palau for the 32nd Session *of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2025) *Concluding observations on the initial report of Palau* (CRPD/C/PLW/CO/1).

Government of Palau (2024) *Palau's Replies to the List of Issues Regarding Its Initial Report* (CRPD/C/PLW/RQ/1).

OMEKESANG CRPD Report Project Working Group (2022) *Alternative Report on the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Palau*.

Palau Civil Society Organization (CSO) (2025) *Parallel Report on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

Republic of Palau (2018) *Initial report submitted by Palau under Article 35 of the Convention, due in 2015* (CRPD/C/PLW/1).

Republic of Palau (2024) *VNR Report 2024, Harnessing Our Cultural Heritage to "Build Back Better" for a Sustainable Future*.

Republic of Palau (2022) *Inclusive Education Country Profile*.

Republic of Palau (Amended 2016) *National Disaster Risk Management Framework*.

Republic of Palau, Office of Planning and Statistics (2022) *2020 Census of Population and Housing of the Republic of Palau, Volume I: Basic Tables*.

Republic of Palau, Office of Planning and Statistics (2017) *2015 Census of Population, Housing, and Agriculture for the Republic of Palau*, *Volume I: Basic Tables*.

Republic of Palau, Ministry of State (2024) *National Narrative Report, Thirtieth Anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and Adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)*.

Republic of Palau, Ministry of Health (2023) *Palau Public Health Strategic Plan 2015–2020*

Palau Community College (2025) 15-Year Institutional Master Plan 2025–2039.

Palau Community College (2025) Annual Report 2024.

Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility (2021) *Palau National Infrastructure Investment 2021–2030*.

UNICEF Pacific, Office of Planning & Statistics, and the Pacific Community (2016) *2017 Palau Disability Report: An Analysis of the 2015 Census of Population, Housing, and Agriculture*.