

DISABILITY INCLUSION AS A BUSINESS IMPERATIVE

Dialog's interventions to
address barriers for persons
with disabilities in Sri Lanka





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The Connected Society programme works with the mobile industry, technology companies, the development community and governments to increase access to and adoption of mobile internet, focusing on underserved population groups in developing markets.

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1. KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Dialog Axiata, Sri Lanka's largest mobile telecommunications provider, is committed to using connectivity as a tool for everyone to participate fully in society, including persons with disabilities. Its experience with disability inclusion provides valuable insights and actionable recommendations for other mobile network operators (MNOs) to improve accessibility and advance the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities. The findings of this case study highlight the practical approaches and lessons learned from Dialog's initiatives.



Leadership commitment can make disability inclusion a strategic focus and organisational priority.

Disability inclusion is often overlooked in many organisations, with efforts relegated to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives rather than integrated in the core business strategy. Dialog's CEO, however, positioned disability inclusion as a business imperative, making it a strategic focus and operational priority throughout the organisation. This commitment from the company's leadership ensured that resources were consistently allocated to disability inclusion initiatives, even during financially challenging times. The CEO's commitment also stimulated cross-departmental collaboration, which was vital for implementing initiatives effectively.

Partnerships can make assistive technologies more available, relevant and localised.

Mobile-enabled assistive technology (AT) can significantly improve accessibility and independence for people with disabilities. However, these technologies tend not to be widely available or sufficiently localised to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Dialog's partnerships with assistive technology providers helped make localised solutions more available and affordable. For instance, Dialog collaborated with DeafTawk – an on-demand sign language interpretation service – to translate and optimise its platform for the Sri Lankan market, offering real-time sign language interpretation for more than 3,000 direct users to date.

Co-creating products and services with persons with disabilities results in more relevant and accessible digital offerings.

Many mobile services are inaccessible to persons with disabilities, preventing them from reaping the full benefits of digital offerings. To address this, Dialog engaged persons with disabilities in product testing and service development through workshops and participatory feedback sessions. This process informed accessible redesigns of its website, implementing features like screen reader compatibility and alternative text (alt text) for images. Additionally, engaging Deaf Sri Lankans in the localisation of technologies such as DeafTawk, which are not typically pre-installed or native to mobile devices, provided insights into user needs and resulted in a service that is better adapted to the local context and supports Dialog's Deaf users more effectively.

Tailored digital literacy programmes can increase adoption of technology.

Dialog initially used digital channels to educate customers with disabilities on product usage but quickly pivoted to in-person digital skills workshops after recognising the limitations of digital-only education. Many persons with disabilities faced barriers to digital engagement, such as low digital literacy and lack of accessible content and resources. These workshops, supported by sign language interpreters, reached more than 1,500 participants and, while more resource-intensive than digital channels, proved far more effective in engaging individuals with limited digital skills and knowledge. Following in-person training, DeafTawk usage increased from one to two calls per day to 10 to 15 calls per day, demonstrating that trained participants were more confident using the service.

Partnerships with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities can extend reach, build trust and lead to more inclusive design.

Persons with disabilities often face significant barriers to accessing mobile-enabled services due to isolation, lack of awareness and limited outreach strategies. To address these challenges, Dialog partnered with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), leveraging their trusted networks to extend its reach, promote inclusive services and engage more effectively with the community.

These partnerships played a critical role in raising awareness and boosting uptake of accessible services, including assistive technologies like DeafTawk and Petrallex. OPDs also enabled Dialog to engage persons with disabilities in product testing and development, helping to ensure that services reflected the needs of different types of disabilities. In addition to gaining valuable insights into user needs, Dialog's also engaged effectively with the OPDs and benefitted from their experience. While these collaborations strengthened trust and Dialog's reputation as an inclusive service provider, there were coordination challenges due to the OPDs' varying levels of readiness and capacity.

Despite this, the partnerships have been instrumental in reaching customers with disabilities and making Dialog's services more inclusive and responsive.

Partnerships can make assistive services more affordable for persons with disabilities.

Dialog collaborated with assistive technology providers like DeafTawk and Petrallex to improve access to essential assistive technologies at lower costs. DeafTawk significantly reduced the costs associated with traditional in-person sign language interpretation by providing an on-demand, scalable digital solution. Similarly, Petrallex subscriptions were offered to Dialog customers at LKR 180 per month (approximately USD 0.60), making hearing enhancement tools more accessible. By integrating these solutions and leveraging strategic partnerships, Dialog helped reduce the cost of services and ensure customers with disabilities could access assistive services at a fraction of the cost of traditional alternatives.

Inclusive marketing helps overcome societal barriers.

Among persons with disabilities, perceptions of the relevance of mobile and mobile internet remain low, and there is limited awareness of available products and services. To address this, Dialog launched targeted marketing campaigns highlighting the benefits of mobile services for persons with disabilities and their families, focusing on safety and practical applications. By addressing gatekeeper concerns and societal stigma, these campaigns encouraged broader adoption of mobile technology. However, long-term behaviour change will require sustained, locally adapted messaging.



Sustainable and scalable approaches can create more accessible customer services.

Many hearing-impaired customers face significant barriers when accessing customer care services, often due to a lack of accessible communication options. To address this, Dialog trained customer service staff in Sri Lankan Sign Language (SLSL). However, this approach proved unsustainable due to high staff turnover and varying levels of proficiency among staff, making it difficult to maintain a consistently trained workforce. Quality of communication also varied depending on each staff member's proficiency and confidence in using SLSL.

Recognising the need for a more scalable solution, Dialog integrated DeafTawk in 23 customer care centres, with plans to expand to 110 locations. The DeafTawk app provides an on-demand, sign language interpretation service that ensures sustainable, scalable and higher quality accessible communications between store staff and Deaf customers.

Embedding accessibility in early product development makes inclusion more affordable, scalable and sustainable.

Retrofitting accessibility in digital products is possible but often complex, costly and resource-intensive. Dialog's experience during a platform redesign, where accessibility had not been considered from the outset, highlighted these challenges, requiring extra budget and cross-team coordination. Now, Dialog embeds accessibility in its quality assurance processes, ensuring new products are inclusive by design. This proactive approach reduces the need for later modifications and enables it to deliver more scalable, cost-effective solutions that better serve all customers, including those with disabilities.

2. DIALOG'S COMMITMENT TO DIGITAL INCLUSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN SRI LANKA

Despite the transformative potential of mobile technology for persons with disabilities, there is a significant digital divide in Sri Lanka in terms of mobile ownership and usage. The 2012 census reported an estimated 9% of Sri Lankans over the age of five live with a disability.¹ The number of persons with disabilities is expected to increase as the overall population grows, and the proportion is also anticipated to rise as a result of an ageing demographic. Persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka are 44% less likely to own a mobile phone compared to non-disabled persons. Smartphone ownership is even lower, with approximately one in four persons with disabilities owning a smartphone, compared to one in three non-disabled persons. Fewer than one in 10 persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka uses mobile internet, compared to four in 10 non-disabled persons.²



¹ Approximately 8.7% of Sri Lanka's population (1.8 million) over the age of five lives with a disability (Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka).

² GSMA. (2022). [Closing the Mobile Disability Gap in Sri Lanka: Insights and Recommendations](#).



Dialog Axiata, Sri Lanka's largest mobile telecommunications provider, is committed to improving digital inclusion for persons with disabilities by addressing the key barriers they face. These include limited awareness of mobile internet, lack of literacy and digital skills, the affordability of internet-enabled devices, data and services and concerns about safety and security. The absence of accessible products and services is another barrier for persons with disabilities.

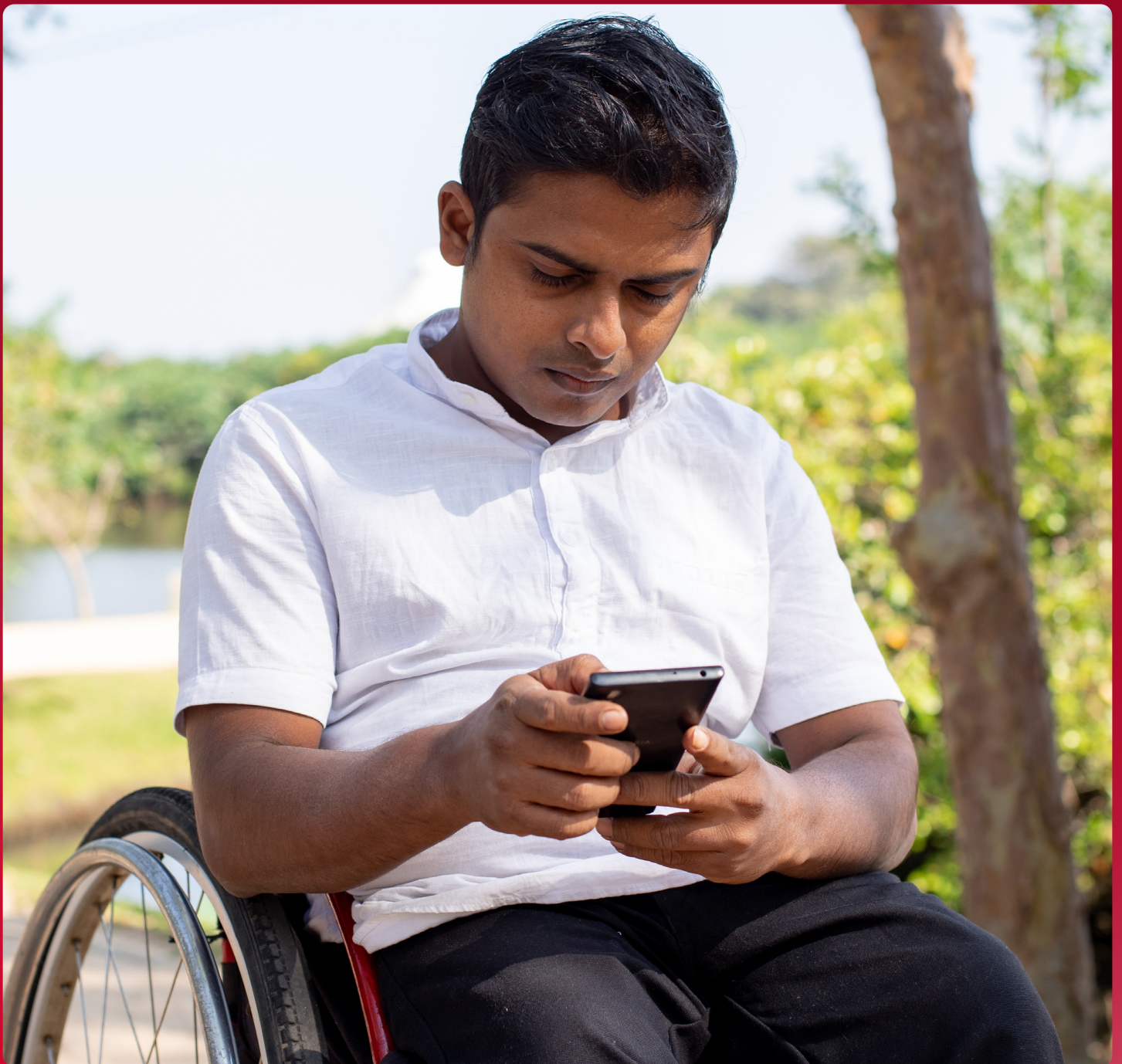
Dialog has recognised these challenges and is committed to addressing them as part of its broader efforts to advance digital inclusion. By tackling these barriers, Dialog is enhancing access to mobile technology and services for persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka.

Dialog's leadership has played a critical role in this journey. Under the guidance of its CEO, disability inclusion has been positioned as a business imperative, demonstrating its role in building a more inclusive customer base. This strategic focus made disability inclusion an operational priority throughout the organisation, ensuring that sufficient resources were consistently allocated to its initiatives, even during challenging financial periods for the business. By promoting collaboration across departments, the CEO ensured that disability inclusion interventions were implemented effectively.

Since becoming a signatory to the [GSMA Principles for Driving the Digital Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities](#) in 2020, Dialog has worked closely with the GSMA to shape its disability inclusion strategy. In 2025, Dialog renewed its commitment to the Principles, reinforcing its long-term dedication to digital inclusion (see its updated [signatory statement here](#)). Through GSMA-facilitated Disability Inclusion Strategy Workshops and a comprehensive independent audit of Dialog's customer touchpoints, Dialog gained a thorough understanding of the challenges faced by both existing and potential customers with disabilities when accessing and using mobile services. These insights guided the design of Dialog's disability inclusion strategy.

This case study explores Dialog's approaches, from addressing the key digital inclusion barriers for persons with disabilities to ensuring products and services are more accessible and affordable. Dialog's efforts serve as an example of how other MNOs can improve accessibility and advance the digital inclusion of persons with disabilities.

3. DIALOG'S APPROACHES TO SUPPORTING DIGITAL INCLUSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



Making mobile and mobile services more affordable for persons with disabilities

Affordability, particularly of internet-enabled devices and data and mobile-enabled services, remains one of the most significant barriers to digital inclusion in Sri Lanka, especially for persons with disabilities who often have lower income levels than the general population. Recognising this challenge, Dialog trialled several approaches to make mobile devices and essential services more affordable.

Internet-enabled devices can be especially out of reach. To address this challenge, Dialog launched LesiPay, a smartphone financing scheme for qualifying Dialog customers that reduces the upfront cost of a device through an instalment scheme. While early traction has demonstrated the potential of financing models to make mobile devices more affordable, Dialog recognises that further efforts are needed to ensure persons with disabilities are aware of, and can benefit from, such offerings. LesiPay's credit scoring is based on current mobile usage, which means it primarily benefits existing customers. To improve affordability for those who do not yet own a device, Dialog is exploring additional mechanisms to expand access to financing options for first-time users.

In another cost-saving initiative, Dialog piloted discounted data and voice bundles tailored for persons with disabilities, but was unable to sustain the offering due to the absence of a reliable national disability identification system. This same limitation has also affected the mobile operator's ability to introduce targeted device affordability programmes, highlighting a broader structural challenge in reaching underserved segments with bespoke solutions.

Building digital skills to increase the use of mobile products and services

Low education levels, literacy and digital skills among persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka create significant barriers to using mobile technology and accessing mobile-enabled services. Dialog identified the need to provide customer education to equip persons with disabilities with basic digital skills and the confidence to use digital products and services.

Initially, it trialled customer education through digital channels, such as online tutorials and digital marketing. However, this approach proved ineffective for persons with disabilities as most are offline and lack the digital skills to engage with these resources. In response, Dialog pivoted to in-person customer education at community gatherings of potential Deaf customers, where sessions were supported by sign language interpreters. These face-to-face sessions reached and equipped more than 1,500 participants with basic mobile digital skills and increased their confidence in using digital services.

Dialog also found that digital marketing resulted in some downloads of services like DeafTawk but, without sufficient customer education, there was low conversion to actual usage. Participants who received in-person training, however, were able to use the service effectively. Usage increased from one to two calls per day to 10 to 15 calls per day after the training. Dialog also reported that participants shared their newfound knowledge with their communities, boosting promotion by word of mouth and potentially reducing the need for direct customer support.

Recognising that customers with disabilities often encounter challenges in the early stages of their digital journey, Dialog created accessible how-to videos with sign language interpretation and alt text to offer ongoing support and learning opportunities. Dialog also acknowledged the need for additional tailored, ongoing support to help customers build their digital skills and troubleshoot challenges after they were onboarded. It is exploring scalable and sustainable approaches to provide this support.

Dialog recognised the substantial resources required for in-person customer education, including collaboration with community groups and interpreters, which adds logistical complexity and cost. However, because of the success and effectiveness of in-person training, Dialog plans to scale and sustain these efforts.

Increasing the perceived relevance of mobile and mobile internet for persons with disabilities

In Sri Lanka, one of the barriers to mobile internet use for persons with disabilities is the perception that mobile and internet services are irrelevant to their lives. This perception, shared by both persons with disabilities and their families, is due to a lack of targeted marketing showcasing the benefits and practical applications, as well as the absence of relevant and accessible products and services that meet their unique needs.

With this in mind, Dialog launched marketing campaigns targeted at persons with disabilities, their families and caregivers, highlighting the benefits of mobile internet and assistive technologies. Featuring real-life examples, such as students using DeafTawk for remote learning, the campaigns used inclusive imagery and messaging to resonate with persons with disabilities and their families. Showcasing the use of DeafTawk in educational settings illustrated how mobile technology can support communication and academic achievement. By showing how mobile internet can address the specific needs of people with disabilities and support meaningful real-life applications, these campaigns helped challenge the misconception that digital services are not relevant to them.

Additionally, Dialog updated its marketing materials to feature accessible formats, including alt text for images and closed captions for videos, making its communication even more inclusive.

To address the lack of locally relevant products and services for persons with disabilities, Dialog collaborated with assistive technology providers, including DeafTawk and Petrallex, to make locally tailored solutions more available (see the spotlight on page 13 below).



DeafTawk App | A Trusted Sign Language Interpretation Service on your Mobile

Dialog Axiata
541K subscribers

Subscribe

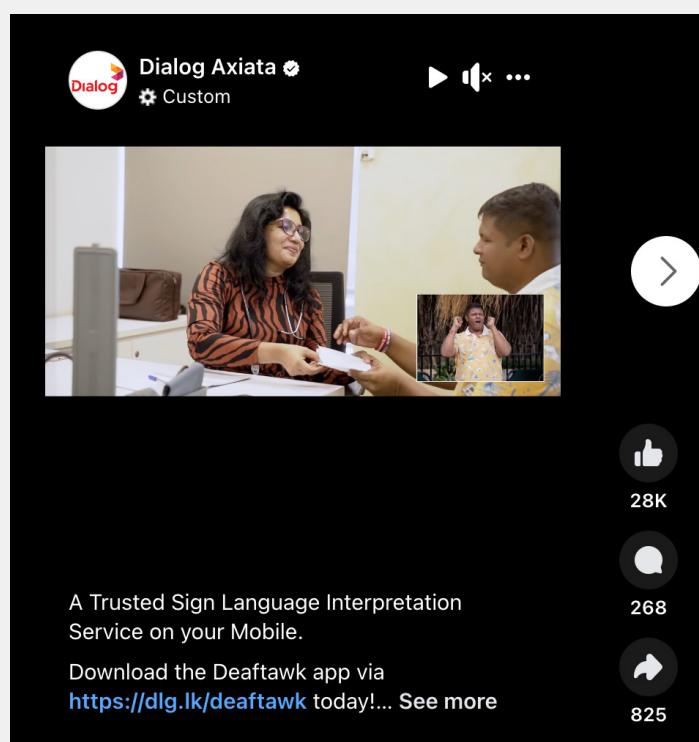
1 Like

Share

Download

493K views 7 months ago #Dialog #DeafTawk #TheFutureToday
A Trusted Sign Language Interpretation Service on your Mobile.

Download the Deaftawk app via <https://dlg.lk/deaftawk> today! ...more



Still images from Dialog's inclusive marketing campaign featuring real stories of Deaf individuals navigating everyday challenges, such as communicating at work or in healthcare settings, before and after using DeafTawk. Featuring actual Deaf community members and aimed at both persons with disabilities and their families, the campaign resonated widely, with the video reaching nearly 500,000 views on YouTube³ and more than 28,000 likes, 300 comments and nearly 1,000 shares on Facebook,⁴ all within seven months of its release.

³ Watch the video [here](#).

⁴ View on [Facebook](#).

SPOTLIGHT: PARTNERSHIPS TO IMPROVE THE AVAILABILITY OF LOCALISED ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES



Mobile-enabled assistive technologies enhance the autonomy of persons with disabilities by improving access to essential tools and services while also making them more affordable and accessible. However, these technologies are often not available or sufficiently localised to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities in LMICs, limiting their uptake and impact.

Recognising the benefits of partnerships rather than developing solutions from scratch, Dialog has collaborated with assistive technology providers such as DeafTawk (since 2021), an app that offers real-time sign language interpretation via video calls, and PetraleX (since 2019), which provides affordable hearing enhancement through a mobile-based hearing aid app. Dialog's decision to partner with assistive technology providers was driven by a need for specialised expertise and resources it did not have in-house. While the providers brought proven technical solutions, Dialog contributed its deep knowledge of the local market, established customer base and broad partnership network to implement localised and accessible offerings in Sri Lanka.

These collaborations enabled higher-quality assistive technology products to be introduced to the market at a significantly lower cost than if either Dialog or the assistive technology providers had attempted to develop and launch them on their own. As a result, digital assistive technology solutions can now be offered to consumers at a fraction of the price they would traditionally pay for equivalent in-person assistive services. Access to in-person sign language interpretation in Sri Lanka is limited, services are scarce and often only available in

urban centres. By contrast, DeafTawk's on-demand digital model enables Deaf users to connect with interpreters anytime, significantly expanding access to communication support. This echoes findings in the GSMA report, [Empowering Persons with Disabilities through Digital Innovation](#).

For example, DeafTawk's on-demand Sri Lankan Sign Language (SNSL) interpretation service is available for just LKR 10 per minute (about USD 0.03) – approximately 29% of the cost of accessing in-person interpretation, which typically costs LKR 35 per minute. Moreover, because qualified in-person interpreters are a limited resource, the app has significantly expanded access to this service for the Deaf community. The integration of Dialog's mobile payment solutions in DeafTawk has removed payment barriers, enabling customers to subscribe using their digital mobile wallets. Dialog also supports users in setting up these accounts during the onboarding process. Similarly, PetraleX offers hearing enhancement via a mobile app for just LKR 180 per month (about USD 0.60) – a fraction of a per cent of the cost of traditional digital hearing aids, which can top LKR 1,000,000 (USD 3,300). PetraleX also provides free hearing tests, typically valued at LKR 2,000–3,000 (USD 6–10), further lowering the cost of access.

In addition to improving affordability, Dialog tailored its solutions to local user needs. By working with Deaf Sri Lankans through user testing and focus groups, it was able to better understand their needs and adjust the products accordingly.



Users highlighted difficulties with text-heavy interfaces and account set-up process, which initially required entering an email address, name and phone number. Many users did not have email accounts or found it challenging to type in their name due to low digital literacy or language barriers. In response, Dialog and DeafTawk removed the email requirement and simplified the set-up process, allowing users to proceed with just a name and phone number. Plans are also underway to introduce one-click login via Facebook or Google to further ease the process. DeafTawk also replaced written content with visual elements, such as icons for call purposes (for example, taxis and grocery shopping) and the Sri Lankan flag for language selection. These changes significantly improved usability and adoption among Deaf users, enabling them to navigate the app more intuitively.

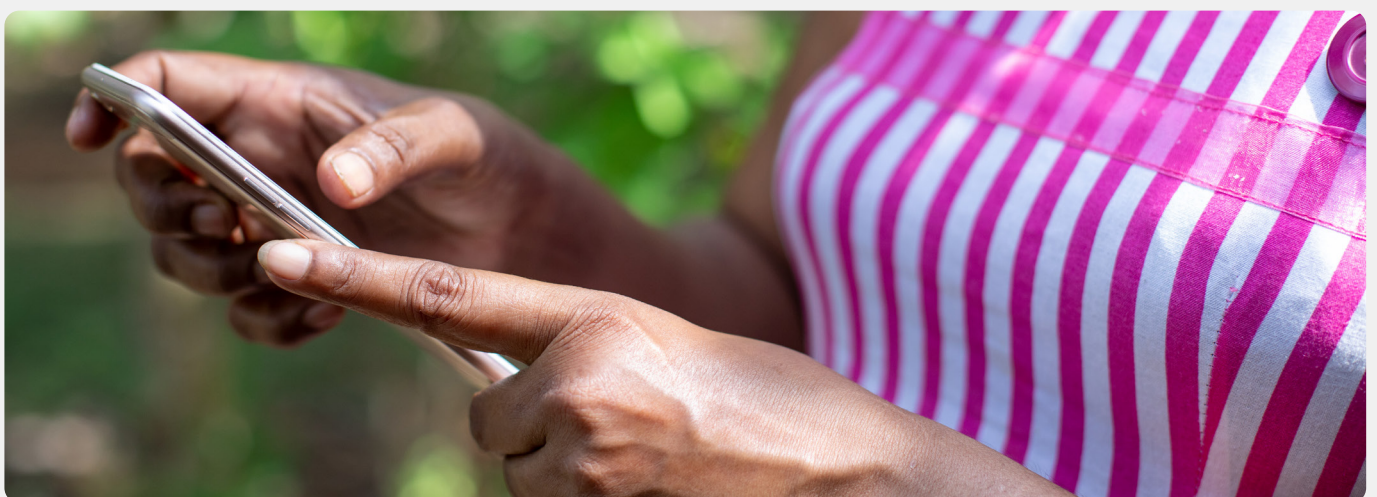
Similar efforts were taken by Petralex, including making its app interface available in Sinhala and Tamil, and modifications to improve usability. Dialog identified gaps in the onboarding experience, particularly in the ability of users to complete the hearing test independently. At Dialog's request, Petralex

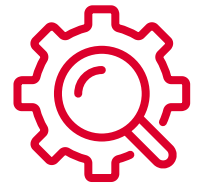
introduced a model that enables audiologists from the Ratmalana Audiology Centre to log in remotely and support users with the hearing test set-up. This feature was implemented specifically for the Sri Lankan context and helped ensure the app could be used effectively by those who might otherwise struggle with self-administered calibration. By eliminating the need for costly clinical hardware and integrating with Dialog's mobile billing system, Petralex offers a practical solution for users who may otherwise be excluded from traditional hearing support. As part of this process, Dialog recognised that onboarding needed to be simplified to support adoption among Deaf and hard-of-hearing users. This led to the development of step-by-step visual instructions to guide users through the set-up process with minimal support (see next page).

Together, these innovations have made essential services more accessible and affordable for persons with disabilities and demonstrated the value of mobile operator-AT provider partnerships in driving digital inclusion.

"The DeafTawk app is very important. It is something we can be very happy about as Deaf people. Rather than meeting a sign language translator in person, we now have the opportunity to contact the translator through this app. We are very happy. Thank you."

DeafTawk user from Colombo, Sri Lanka





How to use Petralex app

Download the app from Google Play Store or App Store and follow the steps bellow

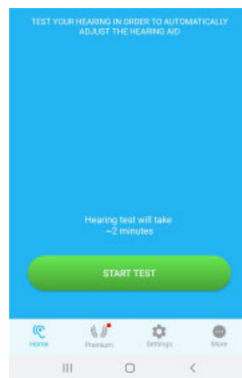
Step 1

Open The "Petralex App"



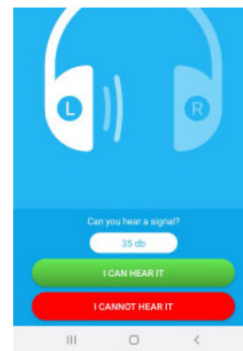
Step 2

Plug in your headset and make sure you wear your headset correctly in both ears (Left and Right). Increase the phone volume to maximum and press "START TEST"



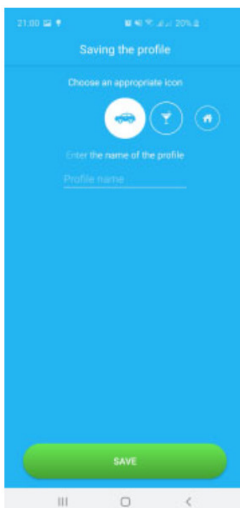
Step 3

If you hear a sound press "I CAN HEAR IT". If you don't hear a sound press "I CANNOT HEAR IT". Keep Pressing "I CANNOT HEAR IT". Keep Pressing "I CANNOT HEAR IT" until you hear a sound and then press "I CAN HEAR IT". Repeat this process until you complete the test.



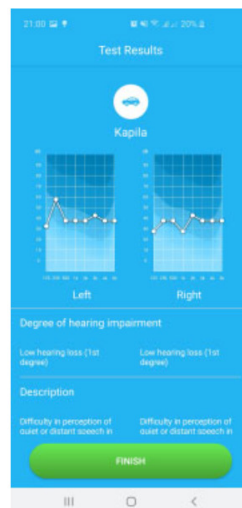
Step 4

Save your profile



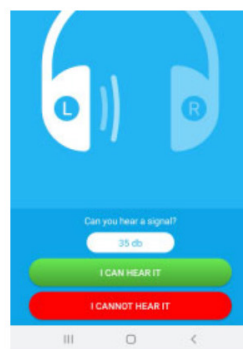
Step 5

You can see your hearing test results.



Step 6

Activate your profile to enhance your hearing. To adjust the volume, you move the sound dial to your comfort sound level. To cancel off unwanted noise press "Noise Suppression". If the sound is still low Press "Super Boost"



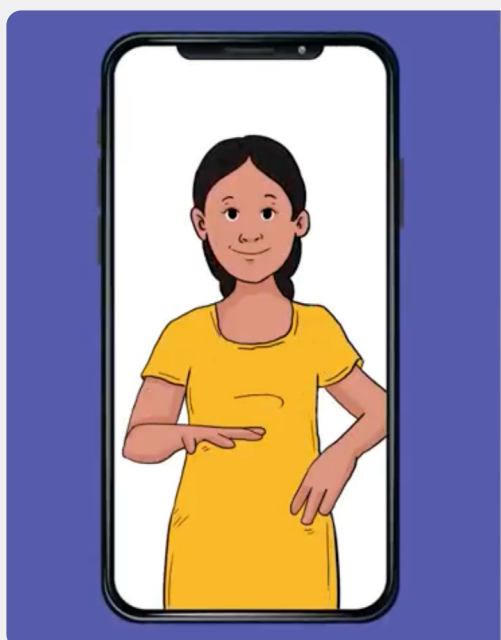
Source: Petralex

These images, taken from Dialog's Petralex campaign materials, show step-by-step onboarding guidance designed to support users with hearing loss, using clear visual instructions to facilitate set-up and use.



DeafTalk

Powered by  Dialog



- An Online Sign Language Interpretation Service via Video Call
- 24/7 Availability
- Available in English, Sinhala & Tamil



These images, from Dialog's promotional video for the DeafTalk app, feature an animated person using sign language. DeafTalk offers on-demand video-based sign language interpretation, available 24/7 in English, Sinhala and Tamil.⁵

⁵ Watch the video [here](#) (English).

Improving the accessibility of mobile products and services

Persons with disabilities often have limited access to, and use of, mobile products and services as they are not designed to meet the accessibility needs of different types of disabilities. Recognising this gap, Dialog took steps to make its offerings more inclusive and accessible.

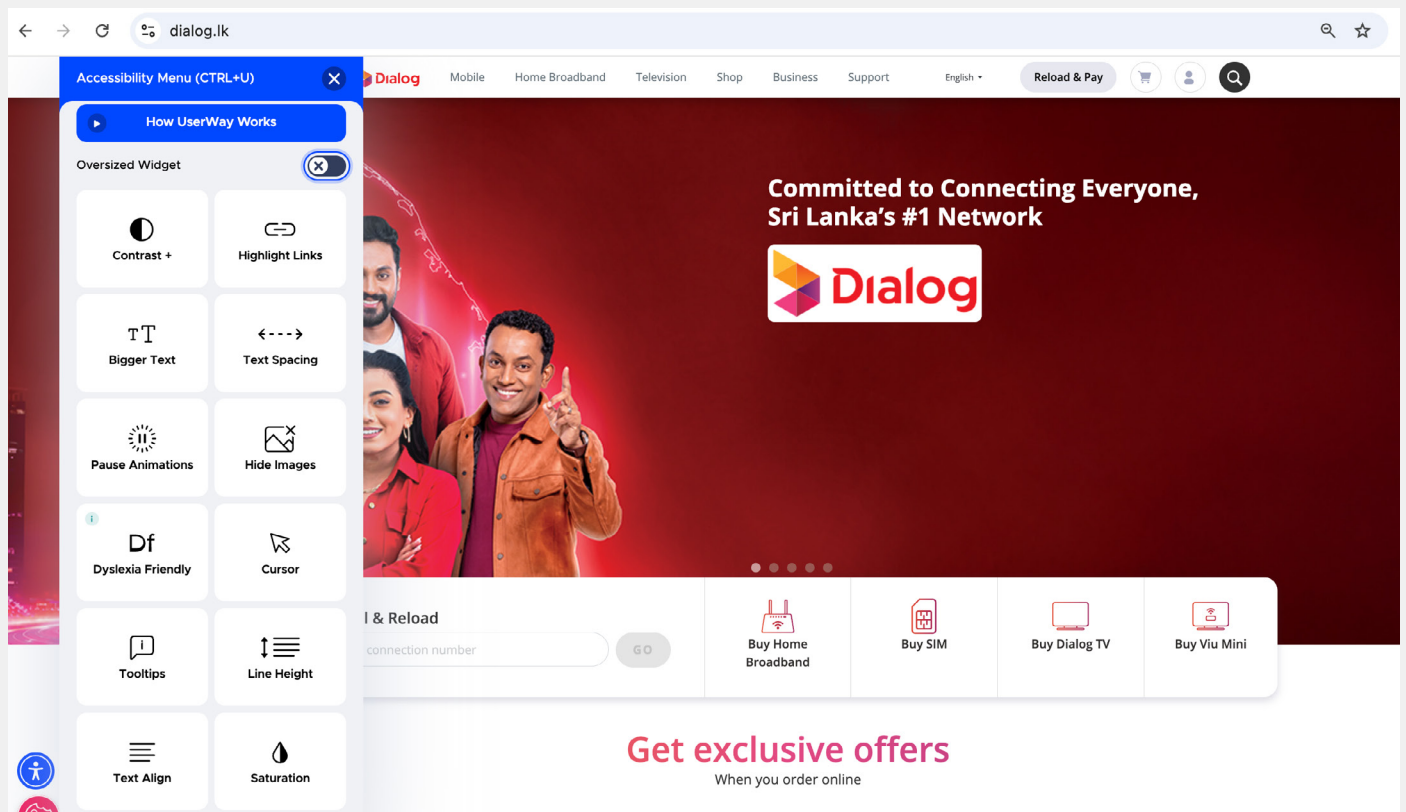
Dialog commissioned an external independent audit to assess how to optimise the accessibility of its platforms and digital products. This informed a comprehensive redesign of its website, incorporating features like accessible colour schemes and user-friendly navigation with simplified browsing menus and clear language tailored to users with different disabilities. On the dialog.lk website, an accessibility button has been added that, when clicked, opens a dashboard allowing customers to toggle various browser elements, such as font size, contrast and navigation aids, to suit their individual needs and preferences (see below).

To ensure these improvements met the actual needs of persons with disabilities, Dialog directly involved users in the co-design process. Through

participatory workshops and user testing sessions, Dialog gathered actionable feedback on accessibility barriers and user experience.

Despite these efforts, implementing accessibility retroactively proved challenging. Because accessibility considerations had not been embedded from the outset, additional budget had to be allocated to incorporate necessary adjustments. This meant that some customisations were limited due to financial constraints. Cross-departmental coordination also presented challenges, as different teams had varying levels of awareness and expertise in accessibility, requiring additional training and alignment. Ensuring that accessibility changes were implemented consistently across multiple digital platforms added to the complexity.

Recognising the importance of sustainability, Dialog has now integrated accessibility criteria in its quality assurance processes, ensuring that future digital products are designed to be accessible from the outset. Dialog.lk is compliant with WCAG 2.1 and 2.2 standards and these guidelines are also being adopted for use across its mobile applications.



Source: Dialog

The accessibility dashboard on dialog.lk offers features such as text resizing and contrast adjustment, allowing users to personalise their browsing experience.



While not yet a mandatory requirement for product launch, accessibility is increasingly being considered during pre-launch reviews to identify and resolve usability barriers. To support this process, Dialog works with consultants on a project basis to test the accessibility of its platforms. These consultants are persons with disabilities – primarily individuals with visual impairments – and review websites and apps at key development stages, providing detailed feedback on accessibility barriers and improvements. This testing has become a critical step in ensuring that new platforms meet diverse user needs.

This shift towards inclusion by design ensures that the needs of persons with disabilities are factored in from the early stages of product development, rather than being addressed later. Embedding accessibility in quality assurance processes streamlines implementation and reduces the need for costly modifications down the line. These improvements have had a measurable impact, enabling more than 25,000 monthly active users with disabilities to access Dialog's digital platforms more effectively. Over the course of a year, the website was accessed by more than 1 million users with disabilities.

Dialog also involved persons with disabilities directly in product design and testing through four participatory workshops. These workshops enabled Dialog to gather actionable feedback on accessibility needs, which informed improvements like simplified navigation features and more intuitive interfaces. This process not only helped refine Dialog's products and services, but also played a crucial role in enhancing their perceived relevance, increasing acceptance and ultimately driving adoption among persons with disabilities. By incorporating direct user feedback, Dialog ensured that its services were more intuitive, user-friendly and aligned with the specific needs of persons with disabilities. Co-creation workshops required significant time and resources, necessitating ongoing engagement to sustain collaboration and long-term impact.

Improving the accessibility of customer service touchpoints

Dialog identified accessibility challenges in both its retail stores and digital customer service channels. Physical barriers, such as the lack of ramps and inadequate support for wheelchair users, combined with communication barriers for Deaf customers, hindered customer service. To address these issues, Dialog implemented several measures. Physical ramps were added to 14 storefronts to improve accessibility for wheelchair users, while six other stores had lifts installed to enhance access. Dialog initially trained staff in sign language interpretation (SLI) to assist Deaf customers, but high staff turnover made this unsustainable. Quality of communication also varied depending on each staff member's proficiency and confidence in using SLSL, which led to inconsistent experiences for Deaf customers. As a result, Dialog integrated DeafTawk tablets in 23 of its stores, enabling sign language interpretation in real time. Simplified onboarding processes, supported by visual aids, were introduced to assist customers with disabilities.

The shift to DeafTawk tablets provided a scalable and effective solution to address in-person communication barriers with persons with disabilities. To ensure DeafTawk was used effectively in stores, Dialog trained and equipped staff not only to use the solution but also to assist customers in learning how to use it themselves. An added benefit was that staff could encourage customers to use DeafTawk in their personal lives, promoting the solution beyond the store environment. By offering a positive first-hand experience, staff were able to drive adoption, creating an additional adoption channel for DeafTawk across Sri Lanka.

This initiative not only enhanced the customer experience but also had a positive impact on employee job satisfaction, as staff felt better equipped to serve a wider range of customers.

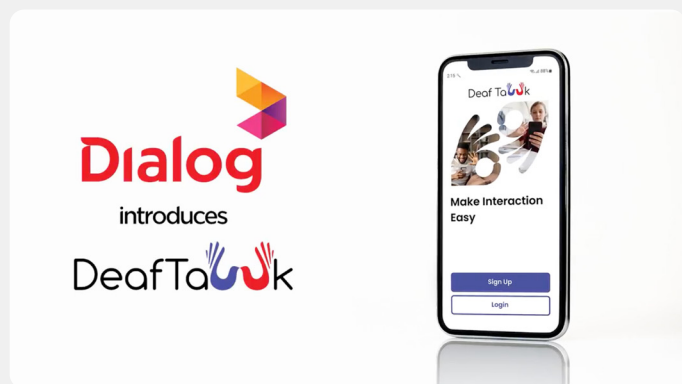
The DeafTawk app has been downloaded nearly 3,000 times to date, with approximately 1,200 user accounts created. This has significantly improved service accessibility for Deaf customers. Encouraged by this success, Dialog plans to expand the DeafTawk service to 110 independently operated retail locations across Sri Lanka.



Source: Dialog

A Dialog Customer Experience Associate supports a Deaf customer using the DeafTawk app at a Dialog Customer Care Centre. This real-time interaction demonstrates how the service enables staff to communicate effectively with customers who use sign language, improving accessibility

The launch event of DeafTawk in Sri Lanka in March 2023 brought together representatives from Dialog, DeafTawk and the GSMA, alongside members of the Deaf community. A sign language interpreter was present at the event. The video of the launch also features an embedded sign language interpreter.⁶



Source: Dialog

Supporting safety and security

Safety and security remain significant barriers to digital inclusion for persons with disabilities in Sri Lanka. The [Closing the Mobile Disability Gap in Sri Lanka](#) report highlights that family members and caretakers often restrict access to mobile internet due to fears of online harassment and fraud.

Dialog engaged with persons with disabilities and their families to understand their safety concerns and is developing strategies to address them. As a first step, Dialog will prioritise customer education by using an online safety training module from the GSMA [Mobile Internet Skills Training Toolkit \(MISTT\)](#). This will help equip persons with disabilities and their families with the skills to navigate online spaces safely, fostering confidence and greater mobile internet adoption.

Going beyond business to support disability inclusion

Dialog has supported the needs of persons with disabilities through external initiatives like the Ratmalana Audiology Centre, which serves approximately 5,000 people each year. Sponsored by Dialog and operating for more than a decade, this social enterprise provides free speech therapy and affordable hearing aids, delivering long-term community benefits.⁷

Dialog is also the official sponsor of the National Paralympic Committee and has supported Paralympic sport in Sri Lanka for more than two decades. In 2024, Dialog sponsored the National Para Athletics Championship, which brought together more than 600 athletes from more than 45 sports clubs across the country. This long-standing partnership has helped elevate Sri Lanka on the global stage, contributing to medal-winning performances at the Paralympic Games, World Para Athletics Championships, Commonwealth Games and Asian Para Games.⁸

⁶ View on [Facebook](#).

⁷ Learn more [here](#).

⁸ Dialog. (9 May 2024). ["Dialog Powers National Para Athletics Championship 2024"](#).

4. THE IMPACT OF DIALOG'S DISABILITY INCLUSION INITIATIVES



Dialog's disability inclusion initiatives have had a positive impact on both its business and its customers, which, according to Dialog, has included a stronger market position and better digital access for persons with disabilities.

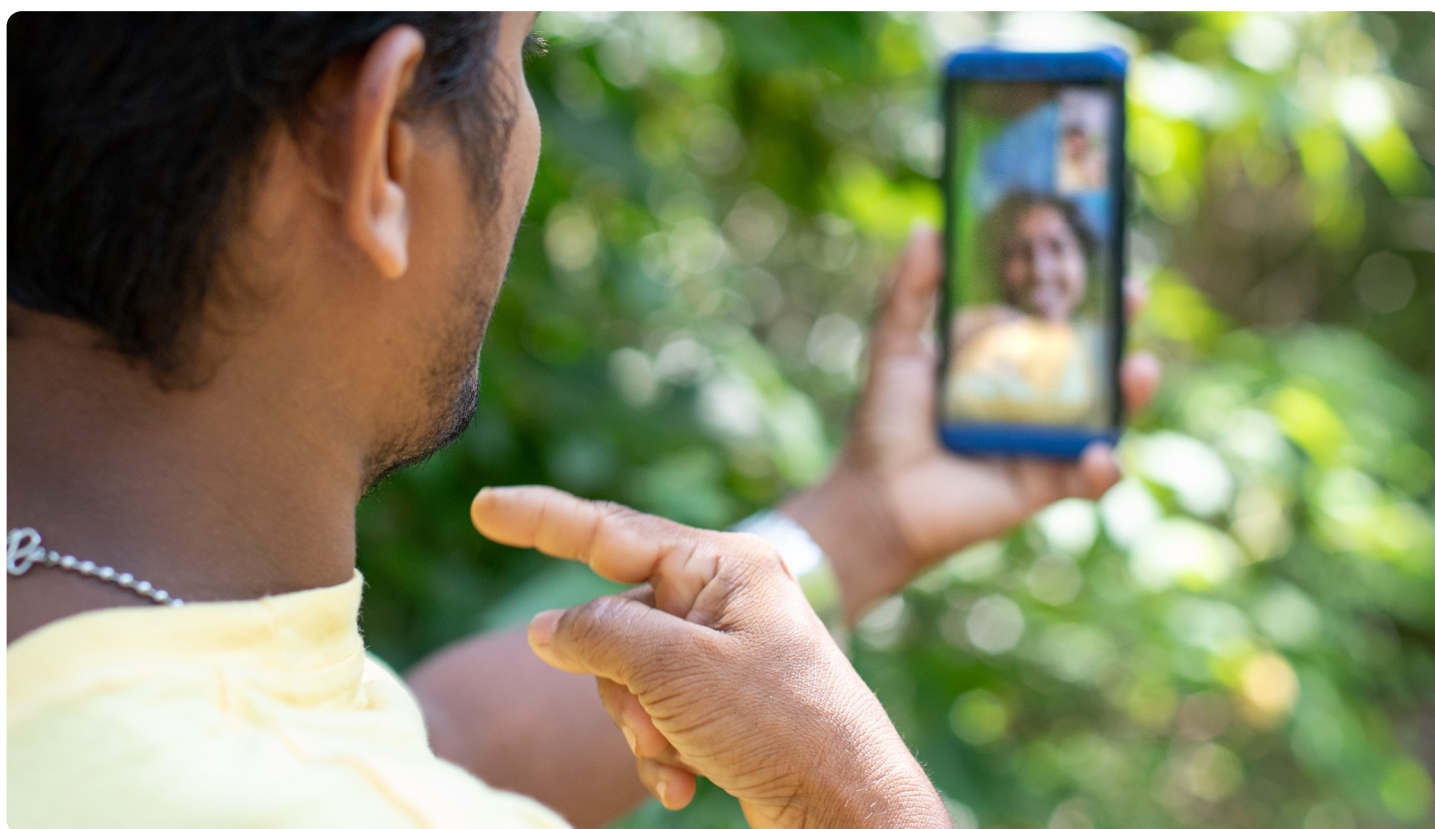
Although these initiatives are not primarily revenue-driven, Dialog notes that they have increased customer engagement, satisfaction and built trust and loyalty, particularly among communities of persons with disabilities. By addressing key barriers such as affordability, digital skills and service accessibility, Dialog has also seen greater retention of customers with disabilities and increased adoption of its accessible products and services, demonstrating that inclusive business practices can create both social and commercial value.

For customers, these initiatives have provided tangible benefits, enhancing access to digital services such as assistive technologies and accessible customer touchpoints, enabling persons with disabilities to engage more effectively with mobile technology. This was reflected in positive user feedback and uptake of services like DeafTawk and Petralex. Customers have expressed high levels of satisfaction with innovations like the DeafTawk real-time sign language interpretation app and Dialog's tailored digital skills training workshops.

To date, Dialog's digital literacy initiatives have reached more than 1,000 participants, equipping them with the confidence to navigate mobile services independently. These interventions have also empowered Dialog's frontline staff to better support customers with disabilities, particularly in-store teams, who report feeling more confident and capable when using tools like DeafTawk to communicate with Deaf customers. Assistive technologies like DeafTawk (1,500 users) and Petralex (more than 30,000 users) have improved accessibility, while Dialog's accessible websites and apps have expanded digital access, serving more than 1 million users with disabilities a year.

"DeafTawk app has helped us a lot to handle [interact with] the customers. Not everyone is familiar with sign language and therefore it was very easy for us to identify what the customer needs. Thank you for introducing this app to us, it is very helpful."

Dialog Customer Experience Associate, female



5. DIALOG'S PLANS TO BETTER REACH AND SUPPORT CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITIES



Dialog plans to build on the progress it has made, consolidating its existing initiatives while continuing to explore new ways to better reach and support persons with disabilities. This commitment, driven by Dialog's leadership, will guide its expanded disability inclusion initiatives, described below. Their impact will be validated through customer feedback, partnerships with OPDs and ongoing performance assessments.

- Improving digital literacy for persons with disabilities through customer education campaigns that use translated versions of the GSMA Mobile Internet Skills Training Toolkit (MISTT) and creating tailored resources for persons with disabilities.
- Making accessible internet-enabled devices even more affordable and available through a smartphone financing scheme, with targeted promotion of these offerings for persons with disabilities.
- Improving the availability of relevant products and services, such as assistive technologies, through new and existing partnerships.
- Further enhancing accessibility at customer touchpoints and scaling the DeafTawk-enabled customer service system to all franchise locations.
- Launching more inclusive marketing campaigns that address societal stigma, educate gatekeepers and promote accessible services.
- Exploring partnerships to develop online safety programmes – particularly for vulnerable groups – starting with women and extending to persons with disabilities.
- Developing more inclusive hiring processes by creating a workplace environment that supports and encourages applications from persons with disabilities.
- Working towards an omni-channel customer service experience, allowing customers with disabilities to choose between in-store and digital support.



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