



**PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT**

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**FORUM DISABILITY MINISTERS' MEETING**

Rarotonga, Cook Islands

21-23 October 2009

**SESSION NINE**

**PACIFIC REGIONAL STRATEGY ON DISABILITY 2010-2015**

This paper was prepared by the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat with assistance from ESCAP and the Pacific Disability Forum.



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### SESSION NINE PACIFIC REGIONAL STRATEGY ON DISABILITY 2010-2015

#### *Summary brief*

#### **Purpose**

To introduce the proposed Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability 2010-2015.

#### **Background**

2. The 2009 Pacific Islands Forum communiqué states:

“Leaders reaffirmed the need for more attention to be directed to the region’s most disadvantaged group – people with disabilities – who are among the poorest and most vulnerable in the world. People with disabilities face many barriers to full participation in society, and this is no exception in the Pacific.

Leaders reaffirmed their strong support for the convening of a Forum meeting, to be held in Cook Islands in October 2009, for Ministers with responsibility for persons with disabilities and welcomed the support of the Australian Government for this initiative. Leaders agreed that the proposed Ministerial meeting should consider a Regional Disability Strategy with an associated plan of action for future implementation.”

3. The adoption of a Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability is thus a response to the directive of Leaders as well a response to the spirit and principles of the Pacific Plan on enabling Pacific people to live free and worthwhile lives in the context of increased regional integration.

#### **Development of the Strategy**

4. The Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability is implementing the human rights initiatives contained in the Pacific Plan. The strategy is based on human rights principles, reducing vulnerability and risks of disabilities; and improving care, support and partnerships. It is relevant to the Pacific region and provides achievable guidelines to support national efforts to advance disability issues.

5. Consultations on the draft strategy were conducted widely with Disabled Persons Organisations at regional meetings in Samoa in 2008 and Vanuatu in 2009 and national meetings in Solomon Islands and Kiribati in 2009. In addition, it was discussed in detail at a regional meeting of government focal points for disability in Fiji in 2008. AusAID, NZAID, ESCAP, OHCHR and the Pacific Disability Forum have also contributed to the development of this strategy.

### **Recommendation**

6. Ministers are invited to:
- a) endorse the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability 2010-2015
  - b) direct the Forum Secretariat and development partners to develop an implementation plan including a monitoring and evaluation framework.



## PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

### THE PACIFIC REGIONAL STRATEGY ON DISABILITY 2010-2015

#### Purpose

The purposes of the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability 2010 – 2015 are to:

- Support Pacific Island Forum member countries to protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities;
- Provide a framework for the coordination of development partners, governments and civil society in building a disability inclusive Pacific; and
- Strengthen commitment of all stakeholders towards implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other human rights instruments which/that relate to disability.

#### Definition

2. This Strategy uses the definition of disability from the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that recognises that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. The CRPD states that ‘Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’

#### Background

3. Persons with disabilities represent an estimated 10 percent<sup>1</sup> of any population. This represents some 800,000 Pacific Island people. Recent census results and national surveys do not provide a clear and accurate picture of the situation of persons with disabilities as there is not a clear and generally accepted definition of disability, surveys have often been based on small population samples, questions asked are often unclear and enumerators are poorly trained on disability issues<sup>2</sup>. There is a need to improve quality

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank estimate as in Social Analysis and Disability: A Guidance Note, 2007, p6.

<sup>2</sup> For example Inclusion International carried out surveys in Kiribati in 2003-2004 and identified 4.36% of the population as living with a disability; while another survey in the island of ‘Eua in Tonga in 2007, showed a percentage of 13%. A similar survey in Samoa revealed an incidence of disability of 2.2%. The 1996 Fiji census included a question on disability and the 12,000 or 2% of the population identified as having a disability.

research and data on the prevalence of disability and the issues affecting the lives of persons with disabilities in the Pacific region.

4. The number of persons with disabilities is increasing as a result of high rates of diabetes, increasing number of traffic and industrial accidents; increasing life expectancy and the lack of early identification, intervention and referral services.

5. Persons with disabilities and their families face prejudice, discrimination and rejection. Children with disabilities are consistently excluded from attending school (less than 10% have access to any form of education and many not attending at any time in their life<sup>3</sup>), health and welfare service provision is poor and largely inaccessible to persons with disabilities and there are few employment opportunities. Where services exist, implementation tends to be ad hoc, uncoordinated and poorly funded. Most governments are not making provision for disability services and inclusive policies in their budgets.

6. Persons with disabilities in Pacific island countries are among the poorest and most marginalised members of their communities. The link between disability and poverty and social exclusion is proven.<sup>4</sup> Disability is both a cause and consequence of poverty.

7. Studies have shown that the traditional view in the Pacific is that persons with disabilities are to be looked after or cared for, and cannot be expected to take a full and active part in village community life, thus marginalising them from mainstream life<sup>5</sup>. This view of persons with disabilities as dependent typifies a 'charity' or 'welfare' approach and is by no means unique to the Pacific. A 'medical' approach is also widespread, where disabilities are seen as health impairments that can be cured. It is only in the last few decades that persons with disabilities in any part of the world have been recognised as fully participating members of society.

8. Forum Island Countries are at different stages of development in regard to disability.<sup>6</sup> Until relatively recently, the national disability agenda has been largely neglected. While many countries have clear rights-based policies, few have specific legislation. Many have active Disabled Persons Organisations (DPO) that have largely lead the disability agenda in collaboration with governments. The role of DPOs has been central to the implementation of the Biwako Millenium Framework.

9. Persons with disabilities must be included in national development processes. Development of rights-based policy, legislation and service provision must be established

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<sup>3</sup> Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Issues in Basic Education for Children and Youth with Disabilities, paper for 2002 Forum Education Ministers Meeting

<sup>4</sup> UNOCHR and IPU From Exclusion to Equality: Realizing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2007, p1; ILO Achieving Equal Employment for People with Disabilities through Legislation, Guidelines, 2004, p.1; Fiji Poverty Report 1997. Govt of Fiji and UNDP, pp55 and 65.

<sup>5</sup> McKinstry, G, Price, P., & Macanawai, S. (2004). "A Review of Policy and Legislation on Disability in the Pacific". Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and Nowland-Foreman, G. & Stubbs, D. (2005). "Free and Equal: A Review of NZAID Pacific Regional Disability Programme for New Zealand Agency for International Development"

<sup>6</sup> ESCAP Disability at a Glance

in partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities and other concerned agencies. Persons with disabilities have proven their capability to contribute to this process.

10. While some persons with disabilities are becoming empowered, the diversity among persons with disabilities needs to be acknowledged and attention should be paid to marginalised groups, such as those with psychosocial disabilities, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, women and youth and those living in rural and remote areas.

11. A recent UNDP study found that throughout the Pacific region, in both rural and urban areas, women and girls with disabilities face multiple and compounding forms of discrimination. Despite some helpful laws, policies and systems of practice in some countries, women with disabilities are less educated, experience higher rates of unemployment, are more likely to be abused, are poorer, are more isolated, experience worse health outcomes and generally have lower social status.<sup>7</sup> Concern regarding women with disabilities is a priority area of the Biwako Millennium Framework and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.

### **Regional and International Commitments**

12. At the 2002 inter-governmental meeting to conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002), governments, including those from Pacific Island Countries, adopted the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (BMF). It builds on the agenda for action which guided the first decade. It outlines a set of principles, strategies, goals, targets, and directives for action, and forms a comprehensive set of guidelines for countries to use in developing policies and planning and implementing programmes for persons with disabilities. While the BMF officially ends in 2012, its utility as a framework will remain.

13. At the 2003 Pacific Islands Forum, the leaders of Pacific Island countries endorsed the BMF as providing a set of goals for Pacific countries to work towards over the next ten years.

14. Pacific Island leaders adopted the Pacific Plan in 2005. The overall emphasis of the plan is to create stronger and deeper links between the sovereign countries of the region. Disability progress and development is reflected in Initiative 12.5 of this plan. A disability desk has been set up in the Forum secretariat for the purpose of coordinating the development and progress of disability initiatives in the Forum island countries.

15. In 2009 Forum Leaders reiterated their support for people with disabilities and reaffirmed the need for more attention to be directed to the most disadvantaged group who are among the poorest and most vulnerable. They acknowledged that people with disability face many barriers to full participation in society. Leaders further noted that the Regional Disability Strategy should focus attention on the need to address issues facing

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<sup>7</sup> UNDP Pacific Centre, 2009, Pacific Sisters with Disabilities: at the Intersection of Discrimination

persons with disabilities in the Pacific, to build greater awareness on the importance of allowing access to greater and more equitable opportunities to enhance their quality of life and full enjoyment of all inalienable human rights.

### **Disability as a Human Rights Issue**

16. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on the 13 December 2006 and came into force on 3 May 2008. The CRPD is a binding treaty that provides a universal standard for the human rights of people with disabilities. The CRPD promotes a shift in understanding that recognises the limitations created by disability not as a problem of a person but as a problem of barriers created by society. The CRPD can provide specific guidance and a framework for national action even for countries that have not yet ratified.

17. A rights-based approach represents a paradigm shift from earlier charity or medical models. The rights of persons with disability and their participation is central to this approach. Persons with disabilities have argued that their ability to function as full and active citizens in a modern society is limited not by their disability but by society's failure to recognise them and accommodate their needs.

### **Why we need a Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability (PRSD)**

18. Disability is an issue that lends itself to a regional approach. The PRSD reflects the reality and needs of the Pacific and its unique social, economic and geographic context. It represents a common agreement on how to progress and a means for sharing experience and practice. The PRSD is designed to provide guidance to PICs in advancing their work in disability. It allows the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and other regional organisations, development partners and civil society a platform for engaging with governments on disability inclusive development and progress at the national and regional level. Few Forum Island Countries, especially very small island states, have the necessary capacity and expertise to develop policy legislation, and programmes, thus support from regional sources is critical.

19. The BMF and Biwako Plus five provided regional mechanisms to assist countries to address national priorities for persons with disabilities. The PRSD will provide a similar tool to assist countries to set national priorities to address the articles of the CRPD.

20. The Strategy identifies thematic areas that would most effectively advance the rights of Pacific persons with disability and ensure their participation in national development processes. The proposed thematic areas are those that can be realistically addressed by countries. Under each thematic area are selected indicative areas for actions designed to provide guidance to countries in regard to how they might address their own priorities and commitments. These activities are also to facilitate coordination with other regional frameworks, such as the Pacific Education

Development Framework (PEDF), which includes inclusive education as a cross-cutting theme<sup>8</sup>

### **Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation**

21. The PRSD will be implemented over a five year period, 2010 to 2015 by governments in collaboration with civil society, regional stakeholders and development partners. An implementation plan will be developed in consultation with stakeholders and a monitoring and evaluation framework will also be developed once the PRSD itself has been endorsed by Ministers. Strategy targets will be linked to regional and international commitments to the BMF and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

22. There will be regular reviews over the life of the Strategy in order to monitor progress and implementation; identify policy gaps and resource constraints.

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<sup>8</sup> Other regional strategies include the Digital Strategy; the Pacific Platform for Women; the Pacific Regional HIV Strategy; the Forum Economic Ministers Action Plan etc.

## **THE PACIFIC REGIONAL STRATEGY ON DISABILITY**

### ***Vision***

An inclusive, barrier-free, and rights-based society for people with disabilities, which embraces the diversity of all Pacific people.

### ***Goal***

To improve the lives and status of persons with disabilities in the Pacific region.

### ***Overarching Principles***

The Strategy:

- i) acknowledges the Vision of the Pacific Island Forum Leaders as reflected in the Pacific Plan;
- ii) affirms the protection and promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities;
- iii) emphasises the need for political leadership in addressing disability issues at the national levels;
- iv) is linked to the Pacific Plan, national disability policies, regional and international mandates;
- v) affirms the need for an enabling environment for persons with disabilities;
- vi) affirms the central role of persons with disabilities in the development and implementation of policy that concerns them.

***The Strategy identifies the following thematic areas for special attention:***

- i) Strengthen Political Leadership and an Enabling Environment
- ii) Recognition and Protection of the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities
- iii) Strengthen Partnerships: Coordination and Collaboration
- iv) Disability Inclusive Development
- v) Enhancing the Central Role of Persons with Disabilities
- vi) Mobilisation of Resources

# THE PACIFIC REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR DISABILITY 2010 TO 2015

## THEMATIC AREAS

### 1. STRENGTHEN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Strong political leadership is necessary to build an inclusive society and ensure that national plans, policies and priorities address the concerns of persons with disabilities. Inclusive policy, legislation and financing are needed to provide an enabling environment for all stakeholders to advance the cause of persons with disabilities.

**OBJECTIVE**

To achieve and sustain commitment and action for the development and advancement of persons with disabilities from all leaders at all levels<sup>9</sup>.

#### INDICATIVE AREAS FOR ACTIONS

- Advocate for the signing, ratification, implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD);
- Advocate for the establishment of National Councils for Persons with Disabilities and advisory committees with clear terms of reference in all FICs;
- Develop and/or strengthening disability policy and legislation;
- Allocate funds in all key budget areas for disability inclusive policies and programmes;
- Encourage regional organisations to integrate disability issues into their mainstream programmes
- Work with Ministries of Education to encourage and promote inclusive education;
- Advocate for the signing and ratification of the International Labor Organisation Convention 159 (ILO 159).

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<sup>9</sup> Political and traditional leaders, religious leaders, business and community leaders

## **2. RECOGNITION AND PROTECTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is an international treaty that identifies the rights of persons with disabilities as well as obligations on States parties to promote, protect and ensure those rights. This underscores the universal acceptance of disability as a human rights concern relevant to all countries. The CRPD reinforces the shift in thinking from disability being seen as a charity or welfare concern to being one of human rights and incorporates a social development perspective.

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To protect and promote the human rights of persons with disabilities.
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### **INDICATIVE AREAS FOR ACTION**

- Advocate for the recognition of the human rights of persons with disabilities as reflected in the CRPD;
- Utilize national, regional and international human rights declarations and agreements to develop national policies and legislation for persons with disabilities;
- Collaborate with development partners for the sustainable funding of human rights training for persons with disabilities;
- Collaborate with major stakeholders to implement training on the human rights approach to issues facing persons with disabilities;
- Strengthen and support national human rights advocacy.

## **3. STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS: COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION**

Disability needs to be addressed by all stakeholders: governments, civil society, disabled persons organisations and development partners working in partnership and recognizing that disability is a cross-cutting issue affecting all sectors of society.

<b>OBJECTIVE</b>	To promote and encourage effective coordination, collaboration and partnership amongst all stakeholders.
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### **INDICATIVE AREAS FOR ACTION**

- Establish and/or strengthen communication and coordination between Governments and Disabled Persons Organisations;
- Ensure coordinated efforts between local, national and international development partners
- Strengthen partnerships for the implementation of the regional strategy;
- Promote and support regional and national initiatives in the prevention of avoidable disability, in particular in addressing and raising awareness of preventable blindness; traffic injuries; sports and work place injuries and advocate for greater awareness of the relationship between non-communicable diseases and disabilities;
- Identify areas for research and mobilise partnerships and funding.
- Promote and support the development of early identification, intervention and referral services

#### 4. DISABILITY INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT

All parts of government and civil society need to include disability into their work programmes so that the issue is not marginalized or compartmentalised.

**OBJECTIVE**

To ensure that disability is mainstreamed into all local and national policies and practices.

#### INDICATIVE AREAS FOR ACTION

- Include disability-related concerns into:
  - National and sector planning and resourcing
  - Disaster planning including food security and the impacts of climate change
  - Sports, recreation and cultural activities
  - Education and training
  - Accessibility provisions in building codes and infrastructure provision
  - National census, labour force and Household Income Expenditure Surveys
  - Employment policies

#### 5. ENHANCING THE CENTRAL ROLE OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

‘Nothing about us without us’ is the motto of persons with disabilities<sup>10</sup> and speaks to the human rights of each person to determine his or her own fate. Persons with disabilities are the most equipped and best informed to speak on their behalf and can contribute to solutions on issues that concern them.

**OBJECTIVE**

To recognise the central role of persons with disabilities and their organisations in addressing their issues

#### INDICATIVE AREAS FOR ACTIONS

- Advocate for the inclusion of disability issues in all national and regional policies and programmes on gender, youth and other disadvantaged and vulnerable groups;
- Establish and support a regional network to identify successful processes/activities involving persons with disabilities that could be replicated or adapted in other PICs;
- Support DPOs working with groups who are hard to reach effectively especially in isolated atolls and islands, disaster prone areas and those in the inaccessible highlands;

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<sup>10</sup> This was first coined by Disabled Peoples International and is widely used by persons with disabilities.

- Address the specific needs of youth, women, girls and children with disabilities.

## 6. MOBILISATION OF RESOURCES

Financial and human resources are required at local, national and regional levels to implement activities on disability inclusive development, as this has been typically under-resourced.

### OBJECTIVE

To have sufficient resources and funding to realise national and regional responses to disability.

### INDICATIVE AREAS FOR ACTION

- Advocate for adequate allocation of funding for disability responses in the national budget;
- Explore the feasibility of establishing a regional funding mechanism for specific disability issues;
- Encourage development partners to increase and sustain funding to support responses to disability;
- Encourage countries to establish a civil service position dedicated solely to disability inclusive development work;
- Establish a central information database of skilled individuals and organisations available to provide technical support for disability responses.

