



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

PIFS/ILO/UN-EPOC/DPI/PDF

Pacific Regional Workshop on Disability,

**Tanoa International Hotel Nadi, Fiji
(1-4 August 2005)**

Representatives from Government

1. Representatives from governments of Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu; along with representatives from non-governmental organisations from Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, met in Nadi from 1-4 August 2005. Observers from the University of the South Pacific, UNESCO, the European Commission, UNDP-Regional Rights Resource Team, Fiji Human Rights Commission, Asia Pacific Centre on Disability (APCD), Inclusion International and Rehabilitation International also attended the workshop.

Resource persons

2. Resource people were from Pacific Disability Forum (PDF), UNESCAP/POC, International Labour Office (ILO), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Vision Pacific Charitable Trust (New Zealand), Fiji National Council for Disabled Persons, Fiji Employers Federation and Fiji Public Service Association, Donna Lene (Samoa), Mrs. Maresilina Tabalailai, Fiji Ministry of Education.

Participants

3. Participants expressed their appreciation for the convening of this Pacific regional workshop on disability as it was the first workshop that brought this range of partners together. Sincere thanks were conveyed to the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) for funding the

workshop and the ILO for funding support provided through Development Cooperation, Ireland.

4. The workshop was opened by a Deputy Secretary General of the Forum Secretariat, Mr Iosefa Maiava. He noted that the disability community has used the Forum processes very effectively, resulting in a discussion of disability at the 2003 Pacific Islands Forum reflected in the Communiqué, which endorsed the Biwako Millennium Framework and provided a mandate for regional work on disability.

5. Remarks were also made by the International Labour Office Director and the NZAID representative.

6. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Review progress in the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework and the recommendations relating to education for children with disabilities arising from the Forum Basic Education Action Plan and the 2003 Pacific Island Forum Leaders meeting.
- Discuss the draft Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities and its implementation.
- Develop policy and programme capacity within governments and national NGOs
- Assess employment opportunities and rehabilitation issues.
- Strengthen government and NSA partnerships at the national level

Recommendations

7. Participants agreed on the relevance and applicability of international and regional commitments such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (BMF), the Education For All initiative, the Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) and other pertinent international and regional agreements, as well as the current development of the Pacific Plan. The participants agreed on the following:

- a. The BMF is a blueprint for action at the national and regional level on disability in the second Asia-Pacific Decade For Disabled Persons recognising that it was adopted by UNESCAP in 2002 and endorsed by the Forum Leaders in 2003. The findings of the mid-term review of the BMF be considered by the 2007 meeting of Forum Leaders.
- b. That the Draft Comprehensive and Integral Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities will further enhance the promotion of rights of people with disabilities and the “rights-based” approach to policy and legislation development. It was noted, however, that there should be

greater involvement from Pacific Island Country representatives and people with disabilities in the development of international instruments.

- c. Disability is both a cause and an effect of poverty in the Pacific as elsewhere. Poverty is mitigated by the protection of fundamental human rights and social inclusion. Action is necessary in a range of areas to alleviate poverty such as providing opportunities for employment, education, community participation and empower people with disabilities as decision making partners.
- d. Inequalities can be reduced when people with disabilities are empowered to take part in all levels of decision making.
- e. Policy and legislation were identified as key mechanisms for implementing BMF priorities.
- f. Partnerships between governments and Disabled Peoples Organizations (DPOs), and other relevant non-state actors including churches are essential for policy development and the sustainable delivery of services.
- g. It was recognised that DPOs play a crucial advocacy role promoting effective policies and service delivery. It was emphasized that countries which did not have DPOs be supported to develop these.
- h. The media can play a key role in raising awareness and changing attitudes. Countries without DPOs were encouraged to
- i. Disability inclusive approaches are the preferred option to ensure disability issues are mainstreamed into all areas, including education and employment. However, it is acknowledged that there are times where a "twin track approach" is necessary when disability needs to be seen as a stand-alone issue when people with disabilities need specialized assistance.
- j. The importance of education cannot be overstated, as it is a fundamental human right incorporated in various international commitments. It provides for life skills and creates sustainable lifestyle opportunities. Inclusive education, early intervention, and teacher education were recognised as priorities. It was further recognised that the education of children and adults with disabilities and there need to be policy, plans and budgetary allocations for the education of children with disabilities. While inclusive education is ideal, there are cases which require specialized education. Inclusive education will be considered in detail at a forthcoming UNESCO regional workshop. The Forum Basic Education Action Plan (FBEAP) provides a further regional mandate for progressing this issue.

- k. People with disabilities must have a right to decent work. Important vehicles for promoting and safeguarding that right include ILO Convention 159 and other standards, as well as national legislation and policies. ILOs work in the region on labour legislation was noted as was the importance of implementing national policies and legislation. To fully participate in society, people with disabilities need vocational training, employment and self-employment services and should have access to mainstream services, whenever possible. Such services must include business development, credit and marketing assistance for those who are self-employed. Range of work options and emerging models of employment such as supported employment and social enterprises were discussed. Lack of awareness about the abilities of people with disabilities and their rights is among the many barriers to economic participation, however. Further, women with disabilities, those who are socially excluded, individuals with severe disabilities and those lacking basic education face the greatest challenges is finding decent work and accessing the vocational training and services. The potential of partnerships with employers' organizations, individual employers and trade unions was noted as a way to improve training and increase employment opportunities.
- l. Legislation and policy development are key to protecting and promoting rights and mandating provision of services. Consultation across all sectors and all levels is of crucial importance in policy development to ensure community ownership, acceptance and relevance. Policy provides the opportunity to implement international conventions and make them relevant to national contexts. It was noted that the inclusion of disability in national constitutions is a powerful way of recognising needs and protecting rights. There was a clear need expressed for a regional source of assistance with development of policies and legislation.
- m. There are many constraints and barriers to implementation of policies and legislation including attitudes, cultural practices and traditions, geography and accessibility of remote communities and the lack of human and financial resources.
- n. National focal points are necessary for the effective coordination of programmes and services. However a whole of government approach, by means of the development of national coordination councils on disability, is needed to incorporate disability across all government programmes and key performance indicators on disability should be developed. Disability must be specifically included in national development plans, budgets and bilateral development assistance agreements.

- o. There is a need for adequate data and research to inform policy and service planning and delivery. A variety of approaches for data collection were discussed including sample surveys and incorporating disability questions into national censuses and other surveys such as Household Income and Expenditure Surveys. Further needs were recognised in the coordination of information from other key sectors particularly health and education.
- p. Women with disabilities are particularly disadvantaged and their needs should be addressed and promoted at all levels.
- q. Some indigenous people with disabilities in the Pacific region are particularly disadvantaged and that their needs should be addressed.
- r. The potential of information communications technology (ICT) to empower people with disabilities was recognised in accordance with the strategies and specific targets in the BMF.
- s. Disability is an issue that lends itself well to regionalism. By pooling expertise and working collaboratively regional networks will be strengthened. Regional assistance, coordination and collaboration must be strengthened through regional organisations, development partners, regional NGO networks, particularly the Pacific Disability Forum. It would be desirable to have a regional focal point for disability to coordinate funding, information, regional capacity building, institutional strengthening etc.
- t. A Ministerial meeting on disability should be considered.
- u. UN-EPOC should continue to support the formation of national action plans and the implementation and monitoring of BMF.
- v. The importance of APCD in implementing the BMF was recognised by the workshop. APCD indicated that it is considering establishing a regional mechanism in the Pacific to meet the growing demand for empowerment for people with disabilities and this was warmly welcomed.
- w. There is a need for building the capacity of DPOs to use the rights based approach for advocacy and empowerment to improve the human rights of PWDs at the community and institutional levels and to advocate for policy and legislative change at a national level. RRRT should in partnership with PIFS/PDF/DPOs/donors/development agencies provide technical support to conduct a regional training programme (Regional Community Paralegal Training on the Rights of PWDs) tailored to promoting the human rights of PWDs. The regional advocates should then conduct in-country training to build the capacity of national advocates.
- x. National governments and regional agencies support PDF.

The workshop recommends that:

- i. Governments progress efforts to address the priority areas in the BMF and endeavour to mainstream disability across all sectors, including national development plans and bilateral development assistance agreements.
- ii. Disability remains on the regional agenda and that the outcomes and recommendations of this workshop are presented to the 2005 Forum Leaders meeting.
- iii. Regional agencies and national governments seek greater commitment from donors to mainstream disability in all programmes and make provision for specific disability programmes.
- iv. APCD is urged to increase the involvement of Pacific people in its empowering of people with disabilities.
- v. Technical assistance be provided and made sustainable through an effective regional mechanism involving partnerships between regional organisations, UN and PDF.