



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM SECRETARIAT

MEETING FOR GOVERNMENT FOCAL POINTS ON DISABILITY IN FORUM ISLAND COUNTRIES

Nadi, Fiji
24-26 November 2008

OUTCOMES

Disability focal points from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu met in Nadi from 24-26 November 2008. Resource persons and observers from AusAID, NZAID, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (UNOCHR), Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community, Pacific Disability Forum (PDF), Foundation of the Peoples of the South Pacific International (FSPI) and the Fiji National Council of Disabled Persons (FNCDP) also attended the meeting.

2. The **objectives** of the meeting were
 - To facilitate capacity building and development on the awareness, recognition and importance of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) leading up to its signing and ratification.
 - To facilitate capacity building in policy development with regard to the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) and the recommendations included in the BMF plus 5
 - To facilitate awareness, recognition and importance of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 159 and its implications for decent work, access, employment opportunities and rehabilitation issues in our Pacific Islands countries.
 - To strengthen the partnership between governments in Pacific Islands Countries and Disabled Peoples' Organisations (DPO) at the national level.
 - To present the draft Pacific Regional Strategy for disability and the strategic directions it should take in the future.
 - To discuss the various initiatives that have been taken by Pacific Island Countries at the national level in the recent past and to provide an opportunity to share ideas on good practices and challenges.
 - To confirm the importance of mainstreaming gender in the disability agenda.

3. **Recognising** that people with disabilities in Forum Island Countries are marginalised from full participation in society and that their rights have not been adequately addressed; that governments are at different stages in policy development, legislation and activities; and that all countries face constraints with lack of capacity, resources and personnel;

4. Further **recognising** the context of the priorities outlined in the:
 - Pacific Plan (sections 12.5 and 12.6);
 - Biwako Millenium Framework for Action and BMF+5;
 - Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD);
 - ILO Convention 159 and Recommendation 168 on the employment of persons with disabilities.

5. Meeting participants **affirmed** that:
 - a. A **rights-based approach** will ensure that people with disabilities can claim their rights, giving them equal opportunities to participate in a barrier-free and inclusive society;
 - b. Disability is a virtually invisible issue, especially mental and intellectual disabilities;
 - c. Disability issues should be mainstreamed in national plans and other policy documents;
 - d. There is a great deal that can be learned from each other;
 - e. Good practices from the region include:
 - Establishing and empowering government focal point on disability;
 - Using the role of Ombudsman rather than courts;
 - Including questions on disability in population censuses and household surveys;
 - Use of BMF to inform policy;
 - How government partnership with DPOs is essential;
 - Making good use of technical assistance from regional development partners e.g. United Nations' ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre, ILO Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Pacific Disability Forum, SPC's Regional Rights Resource Team and FSPI.
 - f. Comprehensive policy development is crucial. Key points on policy development include consultation in all parts of the country including people with disabilities and their families; priorities need to be set; gender should be mainstreamed into policy, a multi-sectoral approach is necessary although a lead ministry should be established and policy makers need a good grasp of national policy, planning and decision making processes. Political issues need to be taken into account.
 - g. Forum Island Countries should consider signing, ratifying and implementing the CRPD and that meeting delegates should advocate and lobby for this. This should be followed by implementation and monitoring.

6. In order to advance the issues of disability in the countries of the Pacific Islands Forum, it was **agreed** to:
 - a. Support the draft Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability, as amended by the meeting.
 - b. The Pacific Disability Strategy should be tabled for approval at a regional Ministerial meeting in 2009 together with further proposals including:
 - i. a realistic timetable of ratification of the CRPD by all countries by 2010;
 - ii. in collaboration with ESCAP, conduct a review of the BMF when it concludes in 2012 with the view to developing a post decade framework for the Pacific;
 - iii. consideration for establishment of enabling mechanisms such as a Pasifika disability fund;
 - iv. assistance to island countries and stakeholder to allow uniform targets and progress on disability work.

- c. Funding support from development partners to the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat should be prioritised to disability work programmes.
- d. Request PIFS, through the Pacific Plan office, to include the CRPD in the Pacific Plan Document.
- e. Sustain assistance from the PIFS to all member countries for policy development, strategic planning, monitoring, evaluation and reporting.
- f. Encourage governments to ensure that equally recognition is given to disability commitments and issues.
- g. A firm commitment by all donor agencies for addressing disability in Pacific island countries.
- h. Donor agencies ensure that the maximum level of donor funds are utilised for national capacity development for sustainable outcomes.
- i. The Forum Secretariat should seek funding to support attachments and learning opportunities between Pacific Island countries.

7. AusAID presented its 'Development for All. Towards a disability-inclusive Australian aid program 2009-2014' strategy. The meeting acknowledged its appreciation for the Australian government's commitment to addressing and supporting disability in the Pacific.

8. The meeting acknowledged the work of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and partners for a successful workshop and for financial assistance provided by NZAID. In particular, the meeting expressed its gratitude for the opening by the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and for his attendance.