



PACIFIC DISABILITY FORUM

Second Pacific Regional Conference on Disability 4th - 7th April 2011

Auckland, New Zealand

Members of the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) including Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu, as well as representatives from Disabled Peoples International (Asia-Pacific Region), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Australia Human Rights Commission, the Australian Agency for International Development and New Zealand Aid Programme attending the Pacific Regional Conference on Disability, with the theme *“Promoting Actions on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in the Pacific Region”*, held on 4-7 April 2011 in Auckland, New Zealand call on all Pacific Island governments and development partners to recognise that:

- Persons with disabilities and their organisations are best placed to provide the necessary fundamental guidance required to develop laws, policies and programs for the advancement of the rights of persons with disabilities in the Pacific.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) provides the legal and policy framework for the rights of persons with disabilities in Pacific Island countries.
- The Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability was adopted by Pacific Ministers for disability in Rarotonga, Cook Islands in October 2009 to set out practical mechanisms by which the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat will support the governments of member countries to implement the articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- The Pacific Islands Forum Leaders endorsed the BMF in August 2003 as the blueprint for advancing the rights of persons with disabilities in all Pacific island countries. At their meeting in Cairnes, Australia in August 2009 and in



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Port Vila, Vanuatu in August 2010, these Leaders again gave strong recommendations towards Pacific people with disabilities in their Communique as well as in the progressing of the Pacific Plan over the next three years.

- The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) endorsed recommendations and outcomes of the 11th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women 2010 to support and address issues on women and girls with disabilities.
- The UNESCAP Committee on Social Development, Second Session held in Bangkok, Thailand in June 2010 with its final report on 'Matters calling for action by the Commission or brought to its attention'

The Pacific Disability Forum, its members and supporters recommend that Pacific Island Governments, CROP and UN agencies, development partners as well as regional and international civil society organisations take significant and tangible steps to implement and/or support the following recommendations of the 2011 Pacific Regional Conference on disability;

- Persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (DPOs) should be an integral part of any decision making processes concerning their rights, entitlements and community participation. DPOs are the true representative spokespeople. Their representatives are persons with disabilities elected by persons with disabilities.
- Continue to support DPOs in engaging with persons with disabilities in remote areas and islands.
- In particular, due to the specific issues faced by deaf Pacific islanders, there should be national associations of the deaf established in Pacific countries to provide Deaf leadership and recognition of indigenous Deaf people.
- Support all education services with an emphasis on improving quality learning for children with disabilities and increase educational opportunities for adults with disabilities, at the local, national and regional level, including early intervention and early childhood education, primary, secondary and vocational education and training.



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- Adopt and implement the recommendations of the Pacific Regional Forum on Women with Disabilities 2011. In particular:
 - a representative from the PDF Women's Committee should participate on the Regional Working Group of UN Women;
 - the linkages with the gender officers from the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat and the Secretariat of the Pacific Communities be strengthened;
 - DPOs be supported to incorporate the CRPD, CEDAW, BMF, MDG and the Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability in strategic plans, programs, activities, funding proposals, and reporting;
 - Pacific Governments that have not already done so, ratify CEDAW and CRPD and their respective Optional Protocols; and ensure that CRPD Article 6, *Women with disabilities* and CRPD Article 7, *Children with disabilities* and other CRPD Articles containing gender equity measures be given priority for implementation;
 - Pacific Governments to ensure that their respective Ministries for disability, women's affairs and all other relevant portfolios need to include specific policies, programs and measures to address the rights of women and girls with disabilities;
 - Pacific Governments adopt and implement the 28 recommendations directed at government that are contained within the UNDP report, *Pacific Sisters with Disabilities: at the Intersection of Discrimination*; and
 - DPOs are supported to act and report on implementation of the 8 recommendations directed at DPOs contained in the *Pacific Sisters Report*.
- Wherever possible ensure equal access to information, for all people with disabilities including for people with intellectual disabilities, sight impaired and deaf people. In particular, people with intellectual disabilities require information in plain language and/or alternative formats, such as video.



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The most appropriate mechanism for access for Deaf people is through sign language and the Deaf cultural context.

- The value and diversity of Pacific island cultures should be acknowledged and CRPD concepts blended with cultural norms to enhance the rights to full participation of persons with disabilities in inclusive traditional communities.
- Recognise the rights of persons with disabilities in recreational, leisure and sporting activities as mandated in Article 30.5 of the CRPD. Utilize physical activity and sport as a means to promote other articles of CRPD, including, but not restricted to health, rehabilitation and education. Develop inclusive policies and laws to promote the rights of children with disabilities and support for parents and careers. Policies and laws must be consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRC and CRPD).
- Develop practical and accessible systems of services for mobility and assistive devices, noting that DPOs must be integral partners in the development of such systems. To ensure that the provision of aids and devices is appropriately targeted governments and development partners are urged to collect data on the needs of people with physical disabilities, particularly the needs of children. Availability and repair of aids and equipment must be practical and accessible, must comply with WHO standards but adapted to Pacific island conditions.
- All Pacific Island countries are urged to continuously implement the articles of the CRPD. Those countries that have not yet ratified are called on to do so and all countries should implement appropriate monitoring procedures. All Governments and development partners should support DPOs to engage in shadow reporting processes.
- Domestic legislation should be harmonized with the CRPD to accelerate its implementation through multiple actions, in close collaboration with the National DPOs. In this context, Governments of Pacific Island countries should update and revise their National Policies on Disability with a view to ongoing implementation of the CRPD. Further, Governments should strive



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to further mainstream disability perspectives into all key human rights and development agendas.

- To support and implement laws for the rights of people with disabilities, each Pacific Island country should work toward establishing its own independent human rights institution that includes a mandate to promote and uphold the rights of people with disabilities as set out in the CRPD. The National Human Rights institutions (NHRI) of Australia and New Zealand, as the only two countries in the region with UN accredited NHRIs, should be called on to support the development of NHRIs in Pacific Island countries.

The Pacific Disability Forum acknowledges people with disabilities of the first nations of Australia and New Zealand, notes that they share many of the challenges of Pacific islanders with disabilities, and they may gain from implementation of the above recommendations

Finally, the Pacific Disability Forum reminds Pacific island Governments and development partners that the Biwako Millennium Framework (BMF) remains a highly relevant and practical Blueprint for improving the lives of people with disabilities and urges these stakeholders to pursue the priority areas of the BMF:

- (1) self-help organisations of persons with disabilities and related family and parent associations,
- (2) women with disabilities,
- (3) early detection, early intervention and education,
- (4) training and employment, including self-employment,
- (5) access to built environments and public transport,
- (6) access to information and communications, including information, communication and assistive technologies and
- (7) poverty alleviation through capacity-building, social security and sustainable livelihood programmes.

The four strategic areas are (1) national plan of action on disability, (2) promotion of a rights-based approach to disability issues, (3) disability statistics/common definition of disabilities for planning and (4) strengthened community-based approaches to the prevention of the causes of disability, rehabilitation and empowerment of persons with disabilities.



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Further, Pacific Island Governments are urged to participate in the review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012 and send their delegates to include representatives of disabled persons organisations, to the UNESCAP high level meeting to conclude the Decade to be held in Incheon, Republic of Korea in October 2012.

The Pacific Disability Forum extends its deep gratitude to the Government of New Zealand, Government of Australia, Global Fund for Women, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission and Auckland City Council for their financial assistance which contributed significantly to the success of this biennial Pacific Regional Conference on Disability.