

**Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) and
Australia Pacific Islands Disability Support (APIDS)**

**Capacity Development for Effective and Efficient
Disabled Persons Organisations in
Pacific Island Countries**

Report on Kiribati component of Research

March 2012

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1. Introduction

A Pacific-wide research program entitled “Capacity Development for Effective and Efficient Disabled People’s Organisations in Pacific Island Countries¹”, commenced in February 2011 with the financial assistance of AusAID. The research process will cover 12 countries and continue to June 2012. Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) is undertaking the research in collaboration with Australia Pacific Islands Disability Support (APIDS). The research team comprises representatives from both organisations and includes in-country researcher(s) nominated by each national member Disabled People’s Organisation.

In October 2011, the research team undertook activities in Kiribati. This was the eighth country to be visited, following the pilot study visit to Fiji in February 2011 and research activity in the Cook Islands in March 2011, Samoa in May 2011, Papua New Guinea in July 2011, Solomon Islands in August 2011, Tonga in August/September 2011 and Tuvalu in September/October 2011. The research team comprised:

Katabwena Tawaka (PDF)

Robyn James (APIDS)

Tekamangu Bwauira (Te Toa Matoa)

Vice Secretary of Te Toa Matoa, Teewata Rokete, also played an active support role to the team

This report summarises the process and findings of the research.

2. The DPOs in Kiribati

In summary, the DPO situation in Kiribati has the following features:

¹ This research is being undertaken jointly by PDF and APIDS, and is funded by AusAID.

- A history of DPO activity since 1981
- There is one national cross-disability DPO – Te Toa Matoa – which was established in 1999
- Te Toa Matoa is a central, registered non-government organisation (NGO) with constitution, elected board, paid staff, land, a maneaba and secure office facilities.
- Te Toa Matoa has received small amounts of funding from Inclusion International, Australian Volunteers International (AVI), PDF and APIDS.

2.1 History of DPOs in Kiribati

Te Toa Matoa was established in 1999 and registered as an NGO in 2010. Prior to this formal existence, people with disabilities had formed a group in 1981. They met in each others' homes for socialising and support. From 1981-1988 Red Cross provided transport and a venue for meetings every three months.

The name Te Toa Matoa means a strong giant. The Constitution says that: *We consider ourselves, persons with disabilities, giants with strong minds, wills and strengths to live our lives to the optimum. Although, we were born disabled or became disabled in the course of our lives, we will not let our disabilities to be a limiting/inhibiting or a deciding factor to achieve great accomplishments either on a personal or community level. In unity, if there is a will to reach that goal, there are no limits. The name projects a positive image too to fellow persons with disabilities as a source of encouragement and motivation to utilize what they have such as knowledge, skills and talents in order to have fulfilling and independent lives.*

Amongst the objectives of Te Toa Matoa are:

- To be the Cross-disability consumer organisation for all I-Kiribati with disabilities and actively represent their views

- To ensure that I-Kiribati with disabilities enjoy the rights set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- To alleviate the poverty and suffering experienced by people with disabilities here in Kiribati by whatever financial and other means possible
- To advise Government at all levels to implement policies and programs to assist people with disabilities, and advise and assist Government in that implementation
- To give information and provide advice to people with disabilities and their families, regarding Government, Community and Private disability services which would assist them to overcome the negative effects of disability on their lives

In 2011 a new group was formed for people using wheelchairs. This group is called Wira Tangira (The Wheels of Love) and was established with the support of two Australian volunteers who came to Kiribati as a result of Te Toa Matoi - Motivation Australia Project and the Head of Department, Tungaru Rehabilitation Services. They are affiliated with Te Toa Matoi and have a constitution and board.

A group of blind people are also considering forming an association.

3. Research principles, approaches and methodology

In addition to standard research principles relating to ethical considerations and the selection of a mix of accessible, culturally appropriate tools and processes, the research team approached the methodology with four particular principles in mind:

- We sought to mix the “extraction” of information with opportunities for research participants to learn about their organisations and ways of strengthening them (including opportunities to consider their own definition of capacity and their understanding of and plans for capacity development)
- We sought to focus on understanding the strengths of organisations, how they had been developed over time and how these strengths can be used as the basis for future

planning (strengths based approach) and sharing this understanding between participants

- We sought to provide opportunities for a DPO-nominated person to build research skills in country through collaborative planning and implementation
- We sought to make the research process accessible for people with a variety of impairments.

In practice, the in-country research approach includes the following elements:

- Working collaboratively with the DPO in country so they have a good sense of “ownership” of the research, rather than consider that the research is being done by outsiders
- Emphasis on respecting participants and on putting them at ease during all stages, particularly in meetings and workshops
- Asking core set of questions for participants, adapted to suit different audiences (e.g. “what do you think are the strengths of your DPO?” or “what do you think are the strengths of the DPOs with whom you work?”)
- Respecting community protocols and customs
- Ensuring different disability groups are involved and included

The research process involves a mix of tools to maximize the chances to confirm any information collected from an individual source:

- Literature survey
- Small group discussions
- Individual meetings
- Workshops
- Case studies (of selected organisations)

3.1 Methodology in Kiribati

From October 6th – 12th 2011, the research team worked together to:

- Develop detailed plans for in-country implementation, giving specific consideration to the Kiribati context
- Identify the questions within each research activity

- Allocate responsibilities among team members
- Undertake the research activities with local organisations in the disability sector and their stakeholders, including meetings and a workshop at the end of the week
- Collate findings at the end of the week of activities and identify lessons about how to improve the research process and methodology for subsequent country visits

Once planning had been undertaken, the following meetings were held during the week:

- A workshop was held on October 7th with the Board and members of Te Toa Matoa with the aim of identifying the organisation's strengths, capacity development options and how the organisation would like to work with donors and development partners
- Interviews with stakeholder groups, including an education provider, a church leader, non-government organisations, a rehabilitation service and Government of Kiribati agencies.

A final workshop of members of Te Toa Matoa was organised on the last day of the in-country visit, for the following purposes:

- To share initial findings and seek discussion and confirmation of these findings
- To discuss two terms: capacity and capacity development
- To introduce the strengths based approach concept, on which the research is based and which is relevant to capacity development planning
- To provide an initial opportunity for collaborative planning for capacity development of Te Toa Matoa

Annex 1 provides the list of research activities each day.

In summary, 38 people participated in meetings, interviews and the workshops. Of the workshop participants, 17 are women (45%), 21 are men (55%) and 29 (76%) have disabilities. A total of 27 participants with disabilities attended both workshops.

4. Findings

The themes listed below emerged from an analysis of notes from all meetings and were discussed and endorsed at the members' workshop on Wednesday:

1. Te Toa Matoa has land, an office, a maneaba², office equipment and two paid staff
2. Te Toa Matoa has a strong governance and management system which includes a constitution, a Board which meets monthly, a strategic plan, and an AGM every year.
3. Te Toa Matoa has talented members who use culture, including music and drama, for awareness and advocacy on the CRPD and also to earn income for Te Toa Matoa
4. Te Toa Matoa has active, enthusiastic and determined members who enjoy being together
5. Te Toa Matoa has strong leaders
6. Te Toa Matoa has a strong women's group who want to be an equal and active part of women's activities in Kiribati
7. Te Toa Matoa has established a working relationship with community leaders of the outer island, Nonouti, and would like to plan for outreach to outer islands
8. Te Toa Matoa has partnerships with some church leaders in Kiribati
9. Te Toa Matoa voices are heard at government and non-government level³
10. Te Toa Matoa Board and staff have the capacity to seek assistance from partner organisations in Kiribati, the region and internationally
11. Te Toa Matoa would like to further develop the skills of its members, including Board, in leadership, office work, income generation, music and drama, crafts, English, IT and Braille
12. Te Toa Matoa would like to work more closely with AMAK⁴ and KANGO to support the advocacy on disability issues and to provide opportunities for members to develop their skills

² A maneaba is a traditional communal meeting place

³ TTM members have raised their concerns that Government Ministers have not attended their functions

⁴ See page 13 for a description of AMAK

13. Te Toa Matoa would like to complete the multi-purpose centre to increase the activities for members
14. Te Toa Matoa would like to advocate to government ministries on the signing and ratification of the CRPD and the endorsing of the National Disability Policy
15. Te Toa Matoa would like an accessible vehicle for transportation of its members
16. Te Toa Matoa would like to work with the School for Disabled to educate future leaders about their rights
17. Te Toa Matoa would like to work with Inclusive Education and Kiribati Institute of Technology for people with disabilities to access adult education, especially learning English, sign language and computer skills
18. Te Toa Matoa would like donors and development partners to act in partnership by being flexible in their processes and funding their priorities, which include capacity development activities, transportation, income generating programs, rebuild the Centre, make the toilet accessible, a workshop for fixing wheelchairs and equipment, portable ramps, renewal of equipment, tools for mending fishing nets, fishing equipment and craft
19. Te Toa Matoa would like donors and development partners to share their expertise and knowledge by providing technical support, including suitable volunteers to assist in capacity development activities

4.1 Discussion

This research attempted to understand perceptions of DPO capacity by members of the DPO themselves and their stakeholders, as well as perceptions of changes in capacity over time and factors which contribute to effective change. Importantly, this research did not attempt to “measure” DPO capacity.

In summary, DPOs have many strengths in capacity terms and there are a number of factors which have contributed to DPO capacity in Kiribati. Most influencing factors have come from within the organisation, with Kiribati cultural values being highly significant.

Others are related to the international disability rights movement, in particular the implementation of rights according to the CRPD.

4.1.1 Model for understanding elements of capacity

While there are many models for understanding organisational capacity, the Baser and Morgan (2009) model has been selected for framing analysis in this research. This model, based on extensive international research, suggests that capacity comprises the following five elements:

CAPABILITY TO COMMIT AND ENGAGE

Includes the following:

- the ability to encourage mindfulness (being thoughtful about the impact of words and actions)
- the ability and willingness to persevere (to keep to goals and actions even when facing difficulties)
- the ability to aspire (to be ambitious; to dream)
- the ability to embed conviction (to make sure everyone is committed to working hard towards the shared goals)
- the ability to take ownership (to make sure that any plans to change the organisation and its work are completely “owned” by the organisation itself)
- the ability to be determined (to make strong efforts to achieve goals despite any challenges or setbacks)

CAPABILITY TO CARRY OUT TECHNICAL, SERVICE DELIVERY AND LOGISTICAL TASKS

Includes the following:

- the ability to deliver services
- the ability to plan strategically (to reach longer-term objectives, not just short-term day-to-day work)
- the ability to manage the implementation of all the plans effectively and efficiently (with consideration given to different definitions of effectiveness and efficiency)
- the ability to manage the finances (in ways which comply with local laws, practices and values)

CAPABILITY TO RELATE AND ATTRACT

Includes the following:

- the ability to buffer the organisation or system from intrusions (to protect organisations from outside destructive or distracting events or people)
- the ability to earn the trust of others, such as donors and partners
- the ability to combine political neutrality and assertive advocacy (to be able to achieve goals confidently without upsetting politicians and others through too much blatant criticism)

CAPABILITY TO ADAPT AND SELF-RENEW

Includes the following:

- the ability to improve individual and organisational learning
- the ability to foster internal dialogue (to provide chances for people to talk with each other openly about things that are happening and what is planned)
- the ability to reposition and reconfigure the organisation
- the ability to incorporate new ideas
- the ability to map out a growth path

CAPABILITY TO BALANCE DIVERSITY AND COHERENCE

Includes the following:

- the ability to communicate
- the ability to build connections (to work collaboratively with other organisations)
- the ability to manage diversity (to make the most of different ideas from people and strengths within the organisation)
- the ability to manage paradox and tension (to work out how to deal with information which is opposite from other information, and how to deal with people who have different ideas)

Using this framework, and based on the findings discussed below, Te Toa Matoa has a number of “stand-out” capacity strengths, including:

- the ability and willingness to persevere, particularly during times of exclusion and lack of support from others
- the ability to sustain a dream of a barrier-free, rights-based society in Kiribati

- the ability to build connections with and earn the trust of other NGOs and donors/development partners
- the ability to combine cultural respect and assertive advocacy
- the ability to communicate using the traditional cultural methods of drama and music

4.1.2 Contextual influences on DPO capacity

Within Kiribati more broadly, the dominant perspective on the situation of people with disabilities is based on medical or welfare/charity models. Under these models, medical professionals, disability service providers or carers/parents make most decisions about the lives of adult people with disabilities. This has meant that until recently, those who influenced Government disability policy were not those comprising people with disabilities themselves, but service provider organisations and individual medical, educational and other experts. Until the last decade, there was negligible official or community recognition about the rights of people with disability, including the right to organize themselves.

The Kiribati Government is a signatory to the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (BMF).

Attendance by two members of Te Toa Matoa at an Australia Leadership Award fellowship leadership program in 2009 and a recent workshop to raise awareness of disability rights implemented by the Australian Human Rights Commission and PDF has been a source of information, confidence and skill.

The Kiribati Government is currently working closely with Disability Coordinator of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat in finalizing its Disability Policy.

4.1.3 Use of culture in advocacy and awareness raising

Te Toa Matoa members have a close connection to culture. As one board member said: *Our strength is culture*. The traditional cultural forms of music, dance and drama are very effectively used in:

- raising awareness on the rights and talents of people with disabilities
- advocating for people with disabilities to be treated as equal members of the community

This strength is fully explored in the attached case study.

4.1.4 Mutual support

The research team was privileged to observe the close relationships between members as many were staying at the maneaba to show their respect while elders from Nonouti Island were visiting (see 4.1.5 and case study for more information). Father Ambo commented: *relationships are very strong within the group; they seem to look at each other like brothers and sisters*

He also talked of the support that members give each other: *when a blind man is pushing a man in a wheelchair one is the muscle one is the eye.*

4.1.5 Te Toa Matoa and its relationship with the broader community

Te Toa Matoa works closely with community groups in Kiribati, including NGOs, churches and sporting associations. Three examples illustrate these working relationships.

The Te Toa Matoa women's group joined Aia Maea Ainen Kiribati (AMAK) earlier in 2011 and is a valued member. AMAK is the umbrella body for women's organizations in Kiribati. One of strategic objectives of AMAK is capacity building for women's empowerment and education. This includes managing life skills training, organising and coordinating in-country and overseas training (including leadership and financial management). Women from Te Toa Matoa are included in these training activities⁵

The President of AMAK was full of admiration for women with disabilities. *They want to be treated like other women. When they first joined we offered to waive fees and they said no, they would pay like everyone else. They have a good spirit. We are very proud of them.*

⁵ From AMAK Strategic Plan 2011-2014

Te Toa Matoa was granted land by the Kiribati Government, which was reclaimed and needed work to make it suitable for buildings. As one of the Board members explained, *we get support from members of the Federation of Weightlifting and Kiribati Scouts; they help us with the heavy work, like clearing land and building.*

Elders from Nonouti Island were staying at the maneaba at the same time as the research was being undertaken. As described in the case study (see Annex), these men were returning a visit from the Te Toa Matoa drama group and band who had spent six weeks on the island undertaking awareness-raising activities. The close relationship developing is positive for understanding people with disabilities on Nonouti. As the Te Toa Matoa said:

People on Nonouti Island are aware; people with disabilities know about their rights and can form their own organisation at home.

4.1.6 External factors which contribute to capacity

Partnerships developed with organisations and people in Kiribati, the region and internationally have contributed to the strengths on Te Toa Matoa in terms of funding, assisting with capacity development activities, working alongside people and running workshops/training.

As a board member said: *we have knowledge of friends who have money.*

Apart from funding assistance, examples of assistance are:

- Te Toa Matoa members learned about their rights as expressed in the CRPD when they participated in the Human Rights training run by the Human Rights Commission and PDF
- Two Australian women recently spent six weeks with Te Toa Matoa working alongside members assisting with preparation of financial reports and funding applications, English captioning of a drama DVD, and designing of a publicity poster.

- PDF has been supporting Te Toa Matoi through the capacity development fund provided by AusAID. This support has enabled Te Toa Matoi to build their office and finance two key positions with the organization, the Disability Coordinator and Finance Office. The funds have also enabled Te Toa Matoi to purchase essential office equipment such as a laptop computer, printer, projector with screen and telephone with fax as well as obtain access to internet.

4.1.7 How DPOs want partners to assist in future

Te Toa Matoi board and members were very clear about their capacity development and funding priorities, as articulated in the findings. The Board was also clear that any donors which provide funding should understand this small developing organisation and support it in a way that strengthens rather than undermines the organisation. As expressed by one Board member: *We like the way that APIDS and PDF give money in small portions.*

4.2 Summary

This research concludes that:

- Te Toa Matoi is unique as a DPO in the Pacific in its use of cultural approaches to create considerable internal and public awareness of the talents and rights of people with disabilities. The unique talents of composing songs and developing dramas have assisted tremendously in developing the skills of the members of Te Toa Matoi.
- The use of the traditional “maneaba” hierarchy system has continued to motivate and inspire the Board of Te Toa Matoi. Elders support and remind members of the Te Toa Matoi to adhere to the decisions of the Board.
- The research process was empowering and motivating in its focus on strengths. Te Toa Matoi members and board were clear about what they do well and how they can make themselves stronger as individuals and as an organisation.

Annex 1: List of research activities

Thursday 6th October

Meeting of research team

Friday 7th October

Workshop with members

Monday 10th October

Interviews with:

- Teurakai Ukenio, Director, Community Development Services Division, Ministry of Internal and Social Affairs
- Tabha Enoka, Principal, School and Centre for Children with Special Needs
- Moia Tetoa, President, Aia Maea Ainen Kiribati (AMAK)
- Tekoalia Tamaroa, Head of Department, Tungaru Rehabilitation Services, Ministry of Health
- Tata Teitiaua, Executive Director, KANGO
- Father Ruatamakii, Ambo

Tuesday 11th October

Interview with:

Bonoue Kaiteie, Inclusive Education Officer, Ministry of Education

Wednesday 12th October

Workshop with members

CASE STUDY – KIRIBATI

Integrating awareness with culture: expressing culture in a modern way

The crowd watched with unease as members of Te Toa Matoa made their way toward the centre of Bairiki Square in Kiribati. They were there to perform a drama as part of a climate change awareness program, organised by the Government of Kiribati. As they introduced themselves, mocking sounds of giggling and laughter could be heard in the background.

This is a customary welcome for Te Toa Matoa when they perform in public. However as the drama unfolded, the crowd began to enjoy the performance and were amazed by the performers. The 12-minute skit was integrated with creative choreographed movements blended into the Kiribati culture, backed with harmonious traditional and modern Kiribati singing.

Te Toa Matoa was created with drama: its name itself is dramatic, with the meaning “a strong giant”. According to a member, *“We consider ourselves, persons with disabilities, giants with strong minds, wills and strengths to live our lives to the optimum. Although we were born disabled or became disabled in the course of our lives, we will not let our disabilities be a limiting, inhibiting or deciding factor. We want to achieve great accomplishments either on a personal or community level.”*

The name Te Toa Matoa projects a positive image as well to fellow persons with disabilities; it is a source of encouragement and motivation to use what they have, such as knowledge, skills and talents, in order to have fulfilling and independent lives.

Like every I-Kiribati, members of Te Toa Matoa have prioritised drama, dance and storytelling as a significant part of their lives. These cultural expressions provide a strong value base for the organisation. Drama and storytelling traditions are very strong in Kiribati. Te Toa Matoa says they *“express better in drama than words”*. The DPO has been using its skills in

drama and dance to advocate for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

For example, in June 2011 thirteen members of Te Toa Matoa travelled by boat to Nonouti Island, 250 kilometers south of Tarawa (the main island of Kiribati). While on the island, the group ran workshops on CRPD and other issues and performed plays about the CRPD. The Te Toa Matoa band played at concerts to raise awareness about the talents of people with disabilities. The aims of the trip were to raise awareness in the general community and to provide education for people with disabilities, their families and the community on the CRPD

During the research team's visit to Kiribati, a group of elders from Nonouti visited Te Toa Matoa to solidify its partnership with Te Toa Matoa and discuss the establishment of a DPO in the Island. This was a significant outcome of the outreach by the DPO.

In order to master the art of drama and dance, one needs skills, creativity, determination, consistency, patience and understanding. Te Toa Matoa members have gained a good reputation and are occasionally being used by Government Departments and NGOs to perform drama and dance for public outreach.

In 2011, Te Toa Matoa took its drama and dance beyond the Pacific horizon and performed at the Ablympics in Korea. This has enabled Te Toa Matoa to raise its profile and continue to promote the rights of people with disabilities internationally.

The success of Te Toa Matoa is mainly due to the support and determination of the Board in realizing and motivating the members to use their creativity and talent in drama and dance. The willingness of development partners to support Te Toa Matoa has also been significant in enabling the production of a DVD and paying the costs associated with their visit to Nonouti.