Australian Aid

PACIFIC WOMEN
SHAPING PACIFIC DEVELOPMENT

Pacific Women Support Unit

Disability Inclusion Practice Note

Abbreviations

CBM	CBM Australia
CPRD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DID	disability inclusive development
DFAT	Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DPO(s)	disabled people's organisation(s)
EOI(s)	Expressions of Interest
EVAW	Ending Violence against Women
FDPF	Fiji Disabled People's Federation
(the) Fund	Fiji Women's Fund
GFP	gender focal point
MA(s)	member association(s)
PDF	Pacific Disability Forum
PFRPD	Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
PIC(s)	Pacific Island country(ies)
Pacific Women	Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)
SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights
TOR	Terms of Reference

Contents

Introduction

Through a 10-year commitment, Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development (*Pacific Women*) connects more than 170 gender equality initiatives supported by Australia and implemented by over 160 partners across 14 Pacific Island countries (PICs).

Pacific Women is one of the largest global commitments to gender equality. It partners with governments, local and international non-government organisations, private sector, disabled people's organisations (DPOs), coalitions and others to improve the political, economic and social opportunities of Pacific women and to end violence against women and girls. Its emphasis is on partnerships and locally-driven development.

A central pillar of the *Pacific Women* program is to increase the voice and agency of all women, including women with disabilities. *Pacific Women* supports bringing gender equality advocates and disability inclusion activists together to build momentum for social change. These events create space for discussing often taboo gender issues such as disability, violence against women, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and gender identity. Furthermore, a seat on the *Pacific Women* Advisory Board is reserved for a woman with disability.

Over the course of the program, *Pacific* Women has sought to mainstream disability inclusion across country and regional planning, program implementation, and reporting, monitoring and evaluation processes. *Pacific Women* has also undertaken some targeted assistance for disability inclusion, including a disability survey in Tuvalu, support to the development of a toolkit on ending violence against women with disability, and working with partners to develop and review disability inclusion guidance and minimum standards.

This commitment reflects the fact that women and girls with disabilities experience intersectional discrimination on the basis of their gender and disability, and face even greater levels of poverty, violence and exclusion. In resource-poor settings with high rates of poverty and less publicly-funded social protection systems, women and girls with disabilities are less likely to access the resources and support they need to fully and meaningfully participate in society.

Compared to their disabled male or non-disabled female peers, women with disabilities in the Pacific are: less educated; experience higher rates of unemployment; are more likely to experience violence; are poorer; are more isolated; and experience worse health outcomes and have lower social status.[1] It is therefore imperative for *Pacific Women* to implement a well-considered approach to disability inclusion with activities to meet the aspirations and needs of women with disability and ensure their inclusion in the program.

---

[1] Stubbs, S. Tawake, S. (2009) *Pacific Sisters with Disabilities at the intersection of Discrimination* UNDP. Retrieved: https://pacificwomen.org/research/pacific-sisters-with-disabilities/

Purpose

The following Practice Note sets out recommendations to guide and enhance disability inclusion across all work areas of the *Pacific Women* Support Unit in Suva and Port Moresby. The Practice Note contributes to achieving our Vision that 'women in the Pacific (regardless of income, location, disability, age or ethic group) participate fully, freely and safely in political, economic and social life'.

Specifically, the Practice Note aims to:

- ensure that *Pacific Women*'s interventions equitably benefit and include women with disabilities

- set out the principles for *Pacific Women*'s approach to disability inclusion

- strengthen disability inclusion through practical measures for integration in all aspects of the program

- provide resources for *Pacific Women* staff, partners and interested stakeholders

- address the prevalence of intersectional forms of discrimination experienced by women with disabilities.

Note that this is a living document, in acknowledgment that good practice evolves over time in line with new research and international and regional guidelines. The language, policy and recommendations will be updated according to guidance from partners and peers representing DPOs. This document is envisaged to live beyond the end of the *Pacific Women* program and inform Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT) gender equality programming in the Pacific.

Guiding Principles

To ensure women and girls with disability participate in and benefit from *Pacific Women*, all stakeholders in the program need to take specific and appropriate actions to incorporate the following **disability inclusion guiding principles** into their work.

Pacific Women uses a twin-track approach to disability inclusion. Projects are expected to take a mainstreaming approach to disability inclusion (to consider actions needed to include women with disabilities in existing *Pacific Women* projects) and the Support Unit will consider targeted activities that have the aim of addressing the specific needs of women with disabilities.

Consultation and Participation

'Nothing about us without us' is the central message of the disability rights movement. This refers to recognising the knowledge and lived experiences of people with disabilities and involving people with disabilities and their representative organisations in all phases of program and policy design, planning and implementation.

- Consult and collaborate with DPOs at all stages of program design, planning and implementation, and support the participation of women with disabilities.

- Recognise the individual experiences, strengths and skills of people with disabilities, and the significant contribution they make to their families and communities.

- Proactively foster the participation of DPOs and women representatives, and allocate sufficient time, resources and funding for meaningful consultation and participation. Be aware that DPOs are often over-stretched and under-resourced (See Box 2).

- Support the priorities and objectives of DPOs. They will know what is best for themselves and their members.

Box 1: About DPOs

Disabled people's organisations (DPOs) are organisations that represent people with disabilities. They are run by and for people with disabilities. Most DPOs are primarily involved in advocacy, networking and information sharing among their members, although some also provide services. Almost all Pacific Island countries have a national DPO. The Pacific Disability Forum (PDF), based in Suva, is the key regional DPO representing people with disabilities in the Pacific: www.pacificdisability.org

Attitudes and Values

Accessibility is more than providing physical access. Negative and misinformed attitudes, are one of the greatest barriers faced by people with disabilities, reinforcing their social marginalisation and isolation.

- Educate yourself and engage on the issues faced by people with disabilities and be open to constructive criticism, advice and feedback.

- Challenge discriminatory attitudes and stereotypes about people with disabilities. Understand the social norms and myths that perpetuate stigma and exclusion of people with disabilities and serve to excuse perpetrators of violence and abuse.

- Take in to account the diverse range of people's abilities. Remember that not all disabilities are visible and always consider people with intellectual and learning disabilities, and people with mental illness, including psychosocial disabilities.

Facilitate DPOs participation in *Pacific Women* programs and opportunities. *Pacific Women* partner, Fiji Women's Fund (the Fund), recognised the lack of expressions of interest from organisations working in disability inclusion during their call for funding. In response, the Fund took affirmative action and reached out to partner with the Fiji Disabled People's Federation (FDPF). The Fund has found that affiliates of the Federation are diverse, with different skills, abilities, and needs. Partnering with FPDF has required additional resources, knowledge, and skills. The Fund has learned the importance of working at the pace of their DPO partners. The Fund is continuing to 'learn as we go' in order to support FDPF to deliver positive impact for people with disabilities in Fiji.

Gendered Dimensions of Disability

Gendered power relations, systemic economic inequality and lack of public services and education, serve to reinforce the exclusion, abuse and disempowerment of women with disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities experience multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination and marginalisation resulting from the interplay between gender, disability, poverty, violence, and other factors such as sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE), geography, ethnicity, and age.

- Recognise the gender dimensions of disability and take into consideration the specific gendered experiences of women and girls with disabilities and their right to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

- Ensure that disability-related projects and activities in wider development sectors consider women and girls with disabilities during design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, including through data collection and disaggregation for disability.

- Make sure that women and girls with disabilities are included as key stakeholders in gender equality policies, strategies, and programs. This should be done from the outset of a project.

- Consider the needs of carers of people with disabilities and the impact disability has on a household, particularly female family members who are usually the primary carers of people with disabilities.

Background

Disability Inclusion

Disability is a part of life. Many people experience a disability at some point in their life cycle, often during old age. Many people have family and friends with disability, or developed a disability in old age, and have spent time caring or being cared for.

The term 'people (or persons) with disabilities' includes people who have episodic or 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.[2] Disability is therefore the result of the interaction between individuals and barriers.

Inclusion is inhibited by barriers including: attitudinal and societal barriers (such as stigma and discrimination); communication barriers (such as lack of sign interpreters); physical barriers (such as inaccessible buildings or lighting); and systemic barriers (such as discriminatory policies and legislation).[3]

An inclusive approach to development seeks to identify and address barriers that prevent people with disabilities from participating in and benefiting from development. "Disability-inclusive development" is both a process and an outcome. It refers to actively including people with disabilities as both **participants** and **beneficiaries** of development programs.

If development efforts overlook disability, they may reinforce discrimination and exclusion and will not effectively reduce poverty among the poorest and most vulnerable. In order to reach the most marginalised, development efforts need to consider the causes of social and economic exclusion, including the hierarchies of power that exist within the particular context and take specific actions for inclusion. The explicit inclusion of people with disabilities as active participants in development processes leads to broader benefits for families and communities, reduces the impacts of poverty, and positively contributes to a country's social and economic development.[4]

Furthermore, inclusion requires recognition of the physical, social and economic structures that leave many segments of the population behind. A transformative approach to inclusion goes beyond inclusion of marginalised groups into existing structures and programs. It requires rethinking social and economic structures and organisations to serve the diversity of experiences, needs, and aspirations of all people.

Intersection of Gender and Disability

Women are disproportionately affected by disability, through experiencing higher rates of disability and being more significantly disadvantaged by disability. Women with disabilities comprise three-quarters of all people with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries.[5] Women and girls with disabilities may experience multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage resulting from the interplay between gender, disability, poverty, and violence.

Box 3: Gender inequality

> **Gender inequality** is a result of unequal power distribution between women and men, reinforced by: ongoing discrimination and violence; economic inequality; laws, policies, and institutions established by and for men; and cultural and social relations that normalise inequality.

---

[2] The reference to disability is based on the characterisation of persons with a disability in Article 1 of the CRPD. The term 'episodic' has been added by DFAT in line with the 'evolving concept of disability' referred to in the Preamble (e).

[3] http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/development-for-all-2015-2020.pdf

[4] http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/development-for-all-2015-2020.pdf

[5] World Bank (2012). *Women with disability.* http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXT

Women and girls with disabilities are among the most vulnerable and marginalised within society, because they are female, have a disability, and very often live in poverty.[6] Women and girls with disabilities experience disability differently to men and boys due to discriminatory and unequal gender norms. They have less education, fewer employment opportunities, and experience major discrimination from family and wider society. In resource-poor settings, this inequality is likely to be heightened even further.

The intersection between gender, disability and poverty creates new and potentially greater challenges and forms of discrimination, which often remain unrecognised in social protection schemes and development programming. While some sectors recognise the vulnerability of people with disability (for example, disaster risk reduction and education) the intersecting causes of exclusion and discrimination experienced by women with disabilities is not often acknowledged and resources are rarely dedicated to address their specific challenges, aspirations and needs.

While most gender equality policies recognise the importance of inclusion of women and girls with disabilities, there is often a lack of national investment in the implementation of those polices. They may also face many challenges when seeking to have a voice in disability-specific decision-making forums. For example, women with disabilities are likely to have fewer years of schooling than men with disabilities,[7] which can limit their involvement in DPOs and advocacy groups that represent their rights. This also limits their voice and agency and constrains their input in to economic, political and social decision making.[8]

Key Facts

- 80% of the world's population of people with disabilities live in developing countries.[9]

- The prevalence of disability among women and girls is higher than for men and boys.[10]

- 65–70% of women with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries live in rural areas.[11]

- Women are at increased risk of acquiring a disability due to neglect in health care, poor workforce conditions, and gender-based violence.[12]

- 20 million women a year acquire a disability as a consequence of pregnancy and childbirth,[13] mainly due to poor birth practices and lack of access to appropriate health care services.

- Only 20% of women with disabilities in low-income countries are employed, compared with 58% of men with disabilities.[14]

Violence

Women and girls with disabilities are at greater risk from all forms of violence than women without disabilities.[15] They are two to three times more likely to be victims of violence, rape, and sexual abuse

---

[6] UNFPA , 2005, Promoting Gender Equality, accessed at http://www.unfpa.org/gender/

[7] UNESCO, (2009) *Towards Education of Children with Disabilities, A Guideline*, UNESCO Bangkok p.4 Retrieved: http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/towards-inclusive-education-for-children-with-disabilities-a-guideline-2009-en.pdf

[8] UNESCO, (2009) *Towards Education of Children with Disabilities, A Guideline*, UNESCO Bangkok p.4 Retrieved: http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/towards-inclusive-education-for-children-with-disabilities-a-guideline-2009-en.pdf

[9] UN enable, Factsheet on Persons with Disabilities, http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=18, accessed 27 September 2011.

[10] World Health Organisation (2011) *World Report on Disability* 2011, p. 31

[11] World Bank (2012). *Women with disability.* http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXT

[12] http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/disability/wwd_statistics.html

[13] United Nations Population Fund. (2009). Motherhood and Human Rights [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from http://www.unfpa.org/public/factsheets/pid/3851

[14] World Health Organisation (2011) *World Report on Disability* 2011.

[15] Cockram, J. Silent Voices; ESCAP, 1995, *Hidden Sisters: Women and Girls with Disabilities in the Asia-Pacific Region*, 2003

than women without disabilities.[16] For women with an intellectual disability, the risk of abuse is tenfold.[17] Further, women with disabilities face substantial challenges accessing survivor services and justice mechanisms. This is exacerbated by geographical and social isolation, low self-esteem, and discriminatory norms and stereotypes that perpetuate impunity for perpetrators.[18]

Poverty

Globally, people with disabilities are far more likely to live in poverty. Poverty also causes disability for reasons such as lack of adequate nutrition, early marriage, or unsafe working conditions[19]. The cycle of poverty and disability perpetuates poverty and gender inequality within a family or household due to increased household expenditure on disability support services, transport and devices, and barriers to rehabilitation, skills training, or job opportunities. Increased costs and caring responsibilities can reduce social and economic opportunities for other family members as well, particularly girls and women, who are often the primary carers for household members with disabilities.

Women and Disability Inclusion in the Pacific

Throughout the Pacific region, in both urban and rural communities, women with disabilities are far more likely to live in poverty.[20] They also experience compounding forms of discrimination and prejudice, based on common assumptions and widely-held beliefs about their status and capacity both as women and as people with disabilities.[21]

Research in the Pacific indicates:[22]

- Women with disabilities are more likely to be unemployed and in lower paid jobs than men with disabilities or other women.[23]

- Women with disabilities are likely to have minimal access to reproductive health information, services and rights, due to assumptions that women with disability are asexual or unable to manage their own sexuality or fertility.[24]

- Women with disabilities may be subjected to involuntary sterilisation and/or forced contraceptive use due to discriminatory attitudes and taboos regarding women with disabilities engaging in sexual relationships and/or becoming parents.[25]

- Women with disabilities are likely to face social and physical isolation, heightened by the absence of family and social support and lack of available means for communication or transport.[26]

---

[16] Department for International Development (DFID), 2000, Disability, Poverty and Development, DFID, UK.

[17] Disabled Women: An International Resource Kit in Heinicke-Motsch, K, Sygall, S, 2004, Building an Inclusive Development community. A Manual on including People with Disabilities in International Development Programs

[18] Violence Against Women and Girls Resource Guide, (2019) Brief on Violence Against Women and girls with Disabilities World Bank. Retrieved at:
https://www.vawgresourceguide.org/sites/vawg/files/briefs/vawg_resource_disability_formatted_v6.pdf

[19] CARE (2015) CARE Australia Disability Framework, retrieved at https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CARE-Australia-Disability-Framework-Revised-FINAL-PDF.pdf

[20] Pacific Disability Forum, (2018) From Recognition to Realisation of Rights: Furthering Effective Partnership for an Inclusive 2030, 2018

[21] http://www.pacificwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/Pacific-Sisters-with-Disabilities-at-the-Intersection-of-Discrimination.pdf

[22] Three key studies in the Pacific have highlighted the challenges and inequalities faced by women with disabilities in the Pacific: UNDP's 2009 report "Pacific Sisters with Disabilities: at the Intersection of Discrimination"; UNFPA's 2013 study "A Deeper Silence: The Unheard Experiences of Women with Disabilities- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Violence against Women in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga'; and Pacific Women's 2017 "Tuvalu Study on People with Disability".

[23] Stubbs, S. Tawake, S. (2009) Pacific Sisters with Disabilities at the intersection of Discrimination UNDP. Retrieved: https://pacificwomen.org/research/pacific-sisters-with-disabilities/ p.22

[24] Stubbs, S. Tawake, S. (2009) Pacific Sisters with Disabilities at the intersection of Discrimination UNDP. Retrieved: https://pacificwomen.org/research/pacific-sisters-with-disabilities/ p.22

[25] UNFPA (2013) A Deeper Silence - The Unheard experiences of Women with Disabilities – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Violence against Women in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga

[26] DFAT/Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development, (2018) Tuvalu Study on People with Disability. Retrieved: https://pacificwomen.org/research/tuvalu-study-on-people-with-disability/

- Women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to family violence, rape and sexual abuse, with perpetrators rarely brought to justice.[27] This is particularly the case for women with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities.[28]

- Women with disabilities experience a lack of support and information for caregivers (mainly family), evidenced by reports of overprotective, and/or violent and neglectful treatment by carers.[29]

- In Tuvalu, women with disabilities are twice as likely to live in hardship compared to men with disabilit.[30]

- The Pacific has some of the highest rates of albinism in the world with around 1 in 700 persons affected by albinism in Fiji.[31] Despite the very high rates of albinism, there is little awareness and understanding of albinism in communities. People with albinism, including children and their mothers, often face discrimination, harassment and social exclusion based on their skin colour and vision impairment.

- High rates of family violence in the Pacific result in women developing a disability due to severe injury. In Papua New Guinea, 80–90% of injuries in women presented to health facilities are reported to be the result of family violence, many of which lead to permanent disability.[32] A study in Fiji found that 47% of women who experienced violence in their lifetime were severely injured, with the impact that one in fifty are now living with a permanent disability.[33]

Box 4: Census data and disability[34]

> While census data and national survey information is improving, there is a lack of reliable population-based data available in many Pacific countries on **the number of people with disabilities and their situation**. In any particular country however, the World Health Organization estimates an average of 15% of the population are living with a disability. This represents some 800,000 Pacific Island people. Women, the elderly and poor households are the groups most affected, particularly in developing countries. Data collection is key to understanding the experiences of people with disabilities and forming policy and programming that is relevant and responsive. The Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions is recommended by the United Nations for use in all national surveys.

---

[27] UNFPA (2013) A Deeper Silence - The Unheard experiences of Women with Disabilities – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Violence against Women in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga

[28] Stubbs, S. Tawake, S. (2009) *Pacific Sisters with Disabilities at the intersection of Discrimination* UNDP. p.18. Retrieved: https://pacificwomen.org/research/pacific-sisters-with-disabilities/

[29] UNFPA (2013) A Deeper Silence - The Unheard experiences of Women with Disabilities – Sexual and Reproductive Health and Violence against Women in Kiribati, Solomon Islands and Tonga

[30] Tavola, H. (2018). Tuvalu Study on People with Disability. DFAT/Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development

[31] Fiji Albinism Project (2018) Retrieved: https://healthyskinfiji.com.au/

[32] Amnesty International 2006, Papua New Guinea: Violence against Women: Not Inevitable, Never Acceptable, Retrieved: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA34/002/2006/en/

[33] Stubbs, S. Tawake, S. (2009) *Pacific Sisters with Disabilities at the intersection of Discrimination* UNDP. Retrieved: https://pacificwomen.org/research/pacific-sisters-with-disabilities/

[34] World Health Organisation (2011) *World Report on Disability*, Retrieved: https://www.who.int/teams/noncommunicable-diseases/disability-and-rehabilitation/world-report-on-disability

Disability Inclusion and COVID-19

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have exacerbated existing discrimination and inequality faced by people with disabilities – from heightened health risks, through to starvation, neglect and violence. For people with disabilities, COVID-19 brings particular risks and challenges. For example, people with disabilities face barriers in accessing critical public health information which is not in accessible formats or does not use clear and simple language.[35] The Pacific Disability Forum has also highlighted that public health recommendations such as social distancing or home isolation may not be options for people who rely on assistance to eat, bathe, and dress.[36] Furthermore, poor living conditions increases their exposure to infection from COVID-19 during an outbreak, and reduces options for implementing recommended protective measures.[37] In Fiji, DPOs have reported that food security is emerging as an a major concern for people with disabilities who have lost jobs.[38]

COVID-19 has exacerbated the already high risk for women and girls with disabilities of sexual violence and isolation with abusive partners, carers, and/or family members.[39] With quarantine and social isolating measures, women and girls have even less access to outside support and help as services and facilities are closed. Global reports have indicated major disruption in access to regular services and supports.[40]

Government responses vary although national budget cuts have already reduced funding disability support schemes (such as transport in Fiji) and to DPOs in some PICs. Avoiding austerity measures in economic response planning and budgeting is critical to ensure the rights and needs of people with disabilities are not further undermined through the social, economic and health impacts of COVID-19. It is critical that there is ongoing consultation with, and social protection to people with disabilities, including coverage of support services, access to health care and education, and a basic income.

Globally, of the 195 countries that have announced social protection measures in response to COVID-19, 75 had a specific focus on people with disabilities.[41] The most common intervention being a one-off payment. While the Pacific has the lowest percentage of coverage of people with disabilities receiving social protection,[42] people with disabilities still face barriers in countries with social protection and benefits available (such as Fiji and Tuvalu). Barriers to accessing this support include delays in registration, disability assessments and the inability to physically travel to specified locations to receive allowances.[43]

---

[35] IFRC, OCHA, WHO, (March 2020), *COVID-19: How to include marginalised and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagements*, Retrieved: https://reliefweb.int/report/world/covid-19-how-include-marginalized-and-vulnerable-people-risk-communication-and

[36] Pacific Disability Forum, (March 2020) *Disability and COVID-19.* Retrieved: http://www.pacificdisability.org/News/Disability-and-COVID-19.aspx

[37] Pacific Disability Forum, (March 2020) *Disability and COVID-19.* Retrieved: http://www.pacificdisability.org/News/Disability-and-COVID-19.aspx

[38] Pacific Beat, ABC Radio, 21/5/20

[39] Women Enable International *COVID-19 at the Intersection of Gender and Disability: Findings of a Global Human Rights Survey March to April 2020* Retrieved at: https://womenenabled.org/pdfs/Women%20Enabled%20International%20COVID-19%20at%20the%20Intersection%20of%20Gender%20and%20Disability%20May%202020%20Final.pdf

[40] DID4All (2020) *Experiences of people with disabilities in COIVD-19: A summary of current evidence* (DFAT) Retrieved at : https://www.did4all.com.au/Resources/Full%20report_Evidence%20Summary%20Disability%20COVID_%20July20.pdf

[41] Cote, A. (2020) *Regional Overview: Inclusion of persons with disabilities in social protection for COVID-19 recovery and beyond.* Webinar Retrieved: https://socialprotection.org/sites/default/files/publications_files/Webinar%20presentation%2001%2009%202020.pdf

[42] ILO (2019) *World Social Protection Report 2017-2019L Universal social protection to achieve the sustainable Development Goals.*

[43] DID4All (2020) *Experiences of people with disabilities in COVID-19: A summary of current evidence* (DFAT) Retrieved at: https://www.did4all.com.au/Resources/Full%20report_Evidence%20Summary%20Disability%20COVID_%20July20.pdf

Box 5: Impact of COVID-19

The isolation, disconnect, and disruption resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact **on the mental well-being of people with disabilities around the world**. Women with psychosocial disabilities face major barriers accessing government support and services and are often excluded from DPOs. This is exacerbated by lack of understanding, and stigma of mental illness, learning differences, chronic pain or fatigue, brain injuries, neurological disorders and cognitive dysfunction among others. In addition, there are few psychosocial specific DPOs or service providers in the region.

Disability Inclusion in the work of *Pacific Women*

Disability Inclusion in the work of *Pacific Women* by Outcome

Leadership and Decision Making

Women with disabilities should be supported to lead and participate in all decision-making fora, including within the disability movement and the women's movement. Women with disabilities must be supported to access formal opportunities to share ideas, learn and lead, and be included in learning forums, research and events, ensuring that they have opportunity to participate, and their voices are heard. *Pacific Women* should actively facilitate the involvement of women with disabilities in leadership programs, including through participation at international fora, on panels and boards, leadership training opportunities, and mentorship. Actively encouraging and supporting the participation of women leaders with disabilities in *Pacific Women* activities requires allocation of funds, resources, and time to ensure meaningful inclusion.

Economic Empowerment

Women with disabilities must be supported to access and benefit from economic opportunities including further education, financial literacy, skills training, and seed funding. *Pacific Women* should identify training and skills development opportunities that have been beneficial to women and girls with disabilities and promote their application more widely in the Pacific context. Engaging with DPOs and women's groups is important to ensure training opportunities are appropriate, practical, and suited to the education level, specialised devices and capabilities of women and girls.

Box 6: Vanuatu Skills Partnership

The Vanuatu Skills Partnership is mainstreaming disability inclusion into its training programs through its disability inclusion policy. Disability-specific activities provide targeted support to identify and improve access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) skills training. The project supports women with disabilities in skills development in handicraft design and production, island massage and beauty services, poultry farming, island cooking and food processing. All skills centres have disability focal points. The project works in close association with Vanuatu's DPOs as well as the Government of Vanuatu's disability focal point.

Ending Violence against Women (EVAW)

In recognition that women with disabilities experience significantly higher rates of violence, *Pacific Women* must ensure there is a clear understanding of the links between violence and disability among staff and embedded in EVAW programming. This involves accessible communication and messaging on violence prevention and service provision as well as ensuring crisis centres and response services are accessible to women with disabilities.

Furthermore, training for staff and first responders is essential in how to respond to violence against women and girls with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities who experience particularly high rates of rape and sexual abuse, and require particular support.[44] Women with disabilities also face greater challenges interacting with the legal system and must be supported to pursue justice through legal support and advice.

Enhancing Agency

Supporting women to exercise their agency is fundamental to empowering women with disabilities. Low self-confidence and internalised negative attitudes stemming from social norms as well as

---

[44] Violence Against Women and Girls Resource Guide, (2019) *Brief on Violence Against Women and girls with Disabilities* World Bank. Retrieved at:
https://www.vawgresourceguide.org/sites/vawg/files/briefs/vawg_resource_disability_formatted_v6.pdf

outright discrimination can prevent women with disabilities from participating in society.[45] Public participation and visibility of women with disabilities is important to ensure that civil society action for legal, governmental and social change includes and incorporate the aspirations and requirements of women with disabilities.

Women with disabilities must be supported to access the social security and services they need to fully and effectively participate in society. This includes access to affordable and quality healthcare, as well as ensuring women and girls with disabilities are able to make choices about their lives, particularly about their sexual and reproductive health and rights (see Box 7).

Supporting women with diverse abilities and requirements is challenging and requires genuine engagement and ongoing collaboration. *Pacific Women* should support resourcing, partnering with, and building the capacity of DPOs to be effective advocates for women and girls with disabilities is critical to enhancing agency.

Box 7: International Planned Parenthood Federation

The sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of people living with disabilities are very often neglected and/or violated due to social norms and stereotypes. *Pacific Women*'s partner, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, trained 8 of their national member associations (MAs) on disability-inclusive clinical services and SRHR education.

Through the training, MAs developed a more targeted approach to service delivery for people with disabilities. Cook Islands' MA, Cook Islands Family Welfare Association, has partnered with local disability groups to provide regular clinics to disabled, aged care and patients suffering from mental illness through outreach. Tonga Family Health Association has a disability focal point for their sexual and reproductive health service delivery, who is an active member of the Tonga DPO. Tuvalu Family Health Association has partnered with the local DPO to provide ongoing SRHR services and education to DPO members and young people.

Six MAs have made amendments to their static clinics to ensure that they are more disability friendly and Solomon Islands member association, Solomon Islands Planned Parenthood Association, undertook a disability inclusion audit of their renovation process, working with the local DPO to ensure that the clinic is inclusive of people with disabilities seeking health care.

Disability Inclusion in the work of *Pacific Women* by Work Area

Disability inclusion should be considered throughout the **program** – for *Pacific Women* this means through country and regional planning (Country or Regional Plans), activity design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting.[46]

Convening

- Where *Pacific Women* plays a convening and catalytic role, the program should incorporate disability inclusion in decision-making forums, events, on panels and consultations, such as annual learning and monitoring, evaluation and learning workshops, learning events, research group meetings, and gender focal point (GFP) meetings.

- *Pacific Women*'s Advisory Board to promote disability inclusion, through representation and participation of the Advisory Board member and in providing technical advice on disability inclusion within *Pacific Women's* programs.

- Support Unit and country gender advisers to undertake capacity building on disability inclusion.

---

[45] Violence Against Women and Girls Resource Guide, (2019) *Brief on Violence Against Women and girls with Disabilities* World Bank. Retrieved at:
https://www.vawgresourceguide.org/sites/vawg/files/briefs/vawg_resource_disability_formatted_v6.pdf

[46] Disability inclusion in the work of *Pacific Women* should be positioned in the wider context of what DPOs and DFAT activities bilaterally and regionally on disability, ensuring work is linked up and complementary.

- *Pacific Women* to facilitate connections with the women's movement by ensuring DPOs and women with disabilities can participate in events and meetings of the women's movement, and supporting women-focused activities of DPOs.

- Involve women with disabilities through their representative organisations, DPOs, in advocacy planning, messaging, and information dissemination.

- Ensure that all meeting, workshop, and consultation venues are fully accessible. This includes accessible infrastructure, communications, and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Communications

- Ensure that in communications and awareness-raising activities, positive messages and images around disability inclusion are being conveyed and reinforced.

- Allocate additional budgets to programming, conferences and communications products to ensure reach to women with disabilities.

- In collaboration with a regional DPO, develop an advocacy brief similar to existing program advocacy briefs around key messages to be shared online and with DFAT Posts.

- Seek opportunities to raise awareness of the rights of women and girls with disabilities with partner governments and program partners.

- Use this Practice Note as a source of information and an advocacy tool with partners working on gender equality.

Programming

- Build on existing relationships with DPOs through ongoing consultation and mutual updates.

- Assess Country and Regional Plans during development or review to embed disability inclusion, drawing on appropriate technical resources, including consultation with women with disabilities and DPOs.

- Review activity proposals and consultant Terms of Reference (TORs) and Expressions of Interest (EOIs) to ensure they consider disability inclusion in the context of the task

- Review all items of work (including evaluations, proposals, research, guidelines) produced by short- and long-term advisers for evidence of how they have and/or intend to consult with women with disabilities.

- TORs and concept notes for baseline studies and scoping for new programs and activities should explicitly include disability data disaggregation and consultation with DPOs.

- Familiarise *Pacific Women* partners with guidance on disability inclusion for project design and ensure all partner design and proposals mainstream disability inclusion.

- Include disability inclusion as a requirement for service delivery partners to ensure their services are accessible to all types of disability (including psychosocial and intellectual) and, if services are not, discuss entry points for improved accessibility

- Facilitate partnership agreements and ongoing relationships between DPOs and existing *Pacific Women* partners for coordinated and combined activities which specifically benefit women with disabilities.

- Provide or facilitate technical assistance to partners with specific disability program implementation needs and ensure larger programs have disability input, either from DFAT or the Support Unit.

- Ensure that adequate funding for disability inclusion is provided within the design budget.

- Ensure that contracts and grant agreements are clear about expectations for disability inclusion in implementation, reporting and resourcing.

Box 8: Budgets and disability inclusion

> DFAT's Disability Inclusion Good Practice Note (February 2016) suggests **3–5% of the overall budget is allocated to disability inclusion**. This may include resources for: reasonable accommodation, technical assistance (if needed), provision of training, community awareness raising activities, sign language interpretation, production of resources in accessible formats, DPO involvement, and carer's allowance.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

- Ensure the *Pacific Women* research strategy ethics checklist assesses prospective research proposals against their inclusion of women and girls with disabilities.

- All research pieces developed and undertaken by *Pacific Women* to include consultation with women with disabilities and consideration of how the issue impacts them.

- *Pacific Women* should examine how it can support relevant partners to expand evidence-based research on key areas affecting women and girls with disabilities.

- Ensure data collection in all programs is disaggregated by sex, age, and disability.

- Integrate quantitative and qualitative disability indicators into existing monitoring and evaluation systems to capture the extent to which women with disabilities are being included in and benefiting from project activities.

- Ensure that partners are reporting on the disability inclusion aspects of their project activities and provide feedback to partners to improve data capture and quality of reporting on disability inclusion.

- Consider integration of the Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions in data collection processes to ensure more accurate identification of people with disabilities. Where partners are using the questions, support them to use the data for improved analysis, reporting, and programming.

- Ensure that the *Pacific Women* Database has the capability to collect, analyse, and store disability-disaggregated data.

- Ensure performance reporting reflects learning and progress on activities as they relate to women and girls with disabilities.

Operations

To be adapted as applicable:

- Adjust recruitment guidelines and templates to ensure people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to apply to *Pacific Women* positions and consultancies.

  – Consider advertising positions through disability employment services as part of standard recruitment networks. Consider prioritising 'lived experience' when assessing eligibility of qualifications from women with disabilities.

  – A statement on job advertisements and on the organisation's website stating that *Pacific Women* is committed to fostering an inclusive work environment for all people, including those with a disability.

  – Ensure disability inclusion is considered through the Operations Manual and linked guidelines and templates.

- Making reasonable adjustments to the work, or work environment, to enable the participation of people with disabilities (for example, include flexible work arrangements, adjustments to work stations and lighting, and the provision of assistive software).

- Ensure that all meetings, workshop and consultation venues are fully accessible including accessible infrastructure and water, sanitation and hygiene facilities. Communication is provided in accessible formats (for example, large-sized font posters, use of sign language interpreters).

- Provision should be made in budgeting for accessibility for conferences co-funded by *Pacific Women*.

- Ensure that contracts and grant agreements are clear about expectations for disability inclusion in implementation, reporting and resourcing.

- New staff to be familiarised with the Disability Inclusion Practice Note, and all short- and long-term advisers are familiarised and/or receive a copy of the Disability Inclusion Practice Note and disability inclusion orientation presentation as part of their induction package.

Long-term and short-term advisers

In addition to following the guidance outlined above under general 'Minimum Standards' and specific work areas, short- and long-term advisers should consider the following, particularly those located in country.

- Contact, meet (where possible), and consult with country DPOs and the disability sector on planned work focus areas. Seek DPO input into activities such as workshops, research, reports, reviews, and community consultations.

- Provide gender-related assistance and training to DPOs to be effective advocates for women and girls with disabilities.

- When working with DPOs, ensure women members are represented as well (especially where DPO leadership is all male).

- Look for opportunities to consult, learn from, and build the capacity of women with disabilities and DPOs.

- Facilitate connections between DPOs, government, and civil society partners in country, including to provide training on gender and disability inclusion.

- Integrate disability inclusion into *Pacific Women* products, reviews, regional plans, and roadmap implementation.

- Review proposals, policies, and country and regional plans to ensure they consider and address inclusion of women and girls with disabilities and assess whether they should include targeted support.

- Identify and familiarise with local disability and knowledge networks at the community and government level. Aim to understand the common experiences for people with disabilities in the local context and what services exist.

Note:

- Country gender advisers and members of the *Pacific Women* Gender Panel Database to be provided with appropriate information and tools to ensure their work is inclusive of women and girls with disability.

- The *Pacific Women* Gender Panel Database should include members with relevant disability expertise.

Disability and Gender Policy Commitments

Key Pacific Island Country Policy Commitments

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is the guiding international framework on understanding and approaching disability. The CRPD does not create new rights but reaffirms existing human rights in the context of disability.[47]

- Article 6 of the CRPD specifically acknowledges that women with disabilities are subject to multiple forms of discrimination and commits States Parties to take all appropriate measure to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women with disabilities.[48]

- Article 32 commits States Parties (including Australia) to ensuring that international development programs are inclusive of and accessible to people with disabilities.[49]

Most PICs have signed or ratified the CRPD and are committed to realising the rights outlined in the convention.[50] However, the translation of provisions in the CRPD into domestic policies and regulations, as well as budget allocation, has not been consistent. In July 2018, the Pacific Disability Forum produced the "Pacific Disability Forum SDG-CRPD Monitoring Report" outlining regional progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the CRPD.

In relation to CRPD Article 6 (Women with Disabilities) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), the report recommended further inclusion of women with disabilities in all initiatives, policies and programs, including SRHR and 'ensuring that disability related program and service are gender sensitive and contribute to women with disabilities empowerment'.[51]

Biwako Plus Five: Further Efforts Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-Free and Rights-Based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific

The 2007 Biwako Plus Five builds on the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (2003) by providing a set of priority actions focused specifically on women with disabilities.[52] It highlights the need for development processes to include women with disabilities and reflect their needs, address discrimination, and promote leadership of women with disability, as well as social, political, economic and cultural empowerment.

Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, 2013 to 2022

The Incheon Strategy focuses on actioning priority goals and targets from 2013 to 2022. It has specific targets on sexual and reproductive health, protection of women and girls from violence and abuse, women's representation in government decision-making bodies and access to mainstream development opportunities.

---

[47] United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, (UNCRPD) Art 4.

[48] UNCRPD, Article 6

[49] UNCRPD, Article 32

[50] PICs to ratify or accede to CRPD include: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, FSM, Nauru, Palau, PNG, Samoa, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Solomon Islands and Tonga have signed but not ratified. From https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ParticipationStatus.aspx?clang=_en , accessed 30 May 2018.

[51] PDF, From Recognition to Realisation of Rights: Furthering Effective Partnership for an Inclusive 2030, 2018

[52] The original Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (2003) promotes an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for people with disabilities in the Asia and Pacific region.

Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PFRPD) 2016-2025

Pacific Island Forum Leaders endorsed the Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PFRPD) in 2016. It supports Pacific governments to promote, protect and fulfil the rights of people with disabilities as outlined in the CRPD. It has five broad goals:

- Livelihoods – promote opportunities through inclusive economic development and decent work.

- Mainstreaming – ensure the rights of persons with disabilities are included in development strategies, national and local policies and community services.

- Leadership and Enabling Environment – develop leadership and an enabling environment for rights-based disability inclusive development.

- Disaster Risk Management – include persons with a disability in climate change adaptation measures and disaster risk management plans and policies.

- Evidence – strengthen disability research statistics and analysis.

The PFRPD, in its summary,[53] recognises that women with disabilities are a particularly vulnerable group. There is specific reference to women with disabilities under Goal 3: Leadership and Enabling Environment: which lists under Outcome 4 'women with disabilities appointed to leadership positions within government ministries, public service officers, DPOs and CSOs.'[54]

Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (2017-2030)

The Pacific Platform for Action was first adopted by 22 Pacific island countries and territories in 1994. It was revised in 2004 and 2017. The 2017-2030 version identifies strategic objectives to reach gender equality priorities over 25 years. The PPA designated a specific expected outcome related to women with disability as 'the improvement of all aspects of women's health and well-being – by exploring innovative strategies and new technologies to increase access to good quality, comprehensive, and inclusive health systems, including social protection, to improve health outcomes, including reducing deaths and disability from non-communicable diseases in women, especially in rural and remote areas'.[55]

Triennial Conferences of Pacific Women

The triennial conferences of Pacific Women have been convened by the Pacific Community for over 40 years. It is an important regional forum in which government officials, representatives of civil society, academics and development partners convene to monitor progress in terms of gender equality in the region, identify recurrent and emerging issues, and make recommendations. The 12th and 13th conferences outcomes propose a series of recommendations to support the inclusion and promote the rights of Pacific women with disabilities.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is convenes each year, to monitor the progress of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. Many Pacific islands countries attend CSW and actively participate in the negotiations of the Agreed Conclusion. The Agreed Conclusions are negotiated between the member states and include recommendations and commitments to progress gender equality in diverse areas and are used to set priorities of national and international bodies. They include specific recommendations for promoting the rights of women with disabilities.

---

[53] Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016–2025, https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/PFRPD.pdf

[54] Pacific Framework for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016–2025, https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/PFRPD.pdf

[55] Outcomes of the 12th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women, 2013, para. 58.

DFAT Policy Commitments

Development for All 2015–2020: Strategy for strengthening disability-inclusive development in Australia's aid program

DFAT's disability inclusion policy provides the strategic framework for Australia's disability inclusive development programs.[56]

The strategic framework outlines four guiding principles, one of which is '**taking into account the interaction of gender and disabilities.**' This guiding principle outlines the need for DFAT's development efforts to be both gender sensitive and disability inclusive by:

- encouraging and facilitating the collection of data in regard to the situation and unique needs of women and girls with disabilities, to make this under-served group more visible to decision makers

- devising outreach strategies to include women and girls with disabilities (The Washington Group Short Set of Disability Questions is recommended by the United Nations for use in all national surveys)

- supporting women with disabilities to develop leadership skills and experience

- providing support to DFAT employees (and others, as appropriate) on how to address the intersections between disability and gender-based discrimination.

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy (2016)

Similar to DFAT's disability strategy, the gender strategy adopts a twin-track approach through targeted and mainstream efforts to address gender inequality as a priority in Australia's foreign policy, international development, and economic diplomacy, and integrating it into all work.

Partnerships for Recovery: Australia's COVID-19 Development Response (2020)

Australia's development priorities to response to the COVID-19 pandemic are set in the new recovery policy, which has 3 pillars. Disability inclusion is addressed under Pillar 2: Stability.[57]

---

[56] Australian Government, *Development for All 2015-2020* http://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/development-for-all-2015-2020.pdf

[57] Disability-inclusive development, Pillar 2 Stability, Australian Government (2020) Retrieved: https://www.dfat.gov.au/development/pillar-2-stability

Additional Resources

Disability Inclusive Development: Overview of Australia's assistance for disability-inclusive development and strategy to strengthen disability-inclusive development.

http://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/development-issues/disability-inclusive-development/Pages/disability-inclusive-development.aspx

Pacific Disability Forum: A library of tools, guidance and research produced in the Pacific and internationally. http://www.pacificdisability.org/Resources.aspx

Inclusion made easy: CBM's practical guide on how to ensure programs are disability inclusive. It includes basic inclusion principles, practical guidance and case studies.

http://www.cbm.org/Inclusion-Made-Easy-329091.php

DID4ALL: Resources for Disability Inclusive Development: includes detailed evidence and guidance on mainstreaming disability-inclusive development in a range of sectors.

https://www.did4all.com.au/ResourceSubTheme.aspx?e9650433-a85b-42d2-8624-aa16a88d1648

Toolkit on Eliminating Violence and girls with disabilities: Produced in Fiji by the Pacific Disability Forum. Includes extensive exercises and guidance on gender and disability training.

http://www.pacificdisability.org/getattachment/Resources/PDF-Resources/Toolkit-on-Eliminating-Violence-Against-Women-And-Girls-With-Disabilities-In-Fiji1.pdf.aspx

Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities Briefing: Violence against women and girls sector brief on women and girls with disabilities.

http://www.vawgresourceguide.org/sector-briefs

Women Enabled International: An overview of frequent violations of the right to education, access to justice, sexual and reproductive health and rights and of the right to be free from gender-based violence for women and girls with disabilities, and examples of what governments must do to realise these rights.

https://womenenabled.org/fact-sheets.html