***PRESS RELEASE – Pacific Disability Forum***

**World Humanitarian Day and Disability in the Pacific**

**Date:** 19th August, 2020

On World Humanitarian Day (WHD) August 19, the world commemorates humanitarian workers killed and injured in the course of their work, and we honour all aid and health workers who continue, despite the odds, to provide life-saving support and protection to people most in need.

Pacific Disability Forum would like to draw special attention to the efforts of the 38 Disabled Peoples Organisations around the Pacific who are spearheading efforts to ensure that people with disabilities are not left behind in the fight against the global epidemic which has affected each of us – COVID 19.

Pacific Disability Forum provides leadership, serves as the regional focal point on disability issues in the Pacific and supports the various national DPOs, donor and development partners as well as civil society and the private sector in the quest to ensure that people with disabilities live in an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society in Pacific Island countries and territories.

The Forum is respectfully calling upon Governments in the Pacific that are party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), to understand and implement the convention from a human rights based approach to disability. This will ensure that persons with disabilities and their representative organizations are adequately supported through inclusive humanitarian framework and allocation of resources to enhance their work in humanitarian preparedness and responses.

PDF is drawing special attention to Article 11 of the Convention which says that States Parties shall take, in accordance with their obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law and international human rights law, all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of persons with disabilities in situations of risk, including situations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies and the occurrence of natural disasters.

This follows recent findings by the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation (FDPF) in their Knowledge, attitude ad practices pertaining to COVID 19 Survey report for May 2020 which showed that humanitarian workers were important. The Survey highlighted that amongst the disabled in society, there was an inclination not to present themselves to the fever clinics set up as they were weary of contracting COVID whilst some also were not aware of the epidemic and how it spread along with the preventative measures that needed to be implemented.

In saying this, PDF wishes all a memorable International Humanitarian Day and seeks that we all put our hands together to salute those social workers tirelessly ensuring that no one gets left behind.

Vinaka.