

Special Edition



7th Pacific Regional Conference on Disability

“We need to reinvigorate and deepen partnerships in order to make our next steps of progress towards disability inclusion.”

This is one of the resolutions of the 7th Pacific Regional Conference on Disability which was held this year in Nadi.



Contd.....

More coverage and pictures from the 7th Pacific Regional Conference on Disability.

The conference brought together 250 representatives from 22 Pacific Island countries including persons with disabilities from members of the Forum as well as dignitaries, mission heads, stakeholders and advocates.

The Regional Conference is held biennially however contd.

With the theme: “NOTHING WITHOUT US: Deepening partnership for an inclusive and Equitable Blue Pacific Continent for Persons with Disabilities,” the 7th PRCD also provided an opportunity Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and Government focal points to come to the table and identify key action points as well as make commitments to the advancement in-country on the implementation of the UNCRPD as well as the SDGs.

Acknowledging the 1.7 million people in Pacific Island countries and territories who are persons with disabilities, attendees once again reiterated their commitment to and welcomed the collective vision in the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent for a Pacific region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, that ensures all Pacific peoples, including persons with disabilities lead free, safe, healthy, and productive lives.



The participants highlighted four main thematic areas which they would focus their attention on mainly:

- (i) an Enabling environment so that the CRPD can be localised,
- (ii) building resilience through the active and equitable participation of persons with disabilities in national disaster preparedness,
- (iii) ensure that persons with disabilities are not forgotten through Inclusive programs and finally
- (iv) the setting up of a regional multistakeholder funding facility to enhance the implementation of the CRPD and SDG through collaboration and cooperation.

The 250 participants from 22 Pacific Island countries and territories, and beyond the Pacific region, representing organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), governments, regional organisations, multilateral organisations, disability service providers, academic institutions, non-governmental organisations, donors, and development partners from Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Indonesia, Kiribati, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Switzerland, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, United States of America and Vanuatu, at the 7th Pacific Regional Conference on Disability, held in Nadi, Fiji, from Tuesday 28th February to Friday 3rd March 2023.

Call made for inclusion

“Include the issues of indigenous persons with disabilities as part of your advocacy efforts!”

This is the call being made by indigenous persons with disabilities from around the region following the 7th Pacific Regional Conference on Disability.

This was the collective voice of indigenous persons with disabilities from Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, Samoa, the Solomon Islands and Tonga who called on those regional Governments, stakeholders and regional partners who have indigenous issues as one of their priority areas.

Following the Conference, the Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Committee called for better concerted efforts by all parties involved over the next two years in 6 areas of work namely:

(i) the need for Pacific Island leaders to recognize the rights of indigenous persons with disabilities through the various international conventions,

(ii) ensure that there are more disability specific training and advocacy efforts geared towards health service providers who are the service providers to indigenous persons in remote and rural areas,

(iii) the need for more attention provided to the provision of support services such as sign language interpreters, guides, etc so that persons with disabilities are not left out during the exchange of vital communication and information as work continues for the inclusion at various international level,

(iv) commitment from humanitarian partners for the provision of accessible evacuation centres,

(v) for a more concerted effort to preserve the unique Pacific cultures and traditions which are slowly eroding and finally

(vi) request for donor partners and agencies to realize the importance of achieving the rights of indigenous persons with disabilities across the Pacific region and to set aside proportions of funding towards programs and services that would help to recognize and further realize these rights as unique peoples of the region.



16th COSP Pacific Side Event - Harmonizing national policies and strategies with the CRPD

An inclusive and equitable Pacific society where all human rights of all persons with disabilities are realised as outlined in the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities is the driving force behind the work being undertaken by the Pacific Disability Forum.

To that extent, the Forum attends the annual Conference of State Parties to the UNCRPD where UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, human rights institutions, disabled persons organizations (DPOs), and civil society come together to discuss the challenges and headway that they have made on the implementation of the Convention.

This year, the CEO along with the Director Operations and a contingent consisting of representatives from our member countries attended and shared their lived experiences. As part of the engagement at the 16th Session of the COSP, PRD hosted the Pacific side event - **"Harmonizing national policies and strategies with the CRPD: Pacific achievement and challenges around core policy instruments and disability services."**

Attendees were able to hear the stories of success and adaptation taken at grassroot level from the Cook Islands, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Samoa.

At the margins of COSP, we ran series of bilateral meetings with key stakeholders. It was an opportunity to meet with Kylie and had strategic conversation around assistive device/technology. Assistive device is a precondition to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in any mainstream program or services.

The discussion is to progress the recommendation in the Regional Procurement Study report, a product of joint work of PDF and Motivation Australia in 2018/2019.

PDF also had a meeting with the Office of the Secretary General. An opportunity to meet with Georgia, a former staff of the International Disability Alliance and progress discussion of the UN DISABILITY INCLUSION STRATEGY in the Pacific. Previous projects supported by #OSG was the access audit done to the UN Offices in Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu.

As part of COSP, PDF along with UN in the Pacific and the UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in partnership with CBM Australia and the Human Rights and Social Division of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) co-hosted the 16th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD Pacific Side event.

With the theme "Harmonizing national policies and strategies with the CRPD: Pacific achievement and challenges around core policy instruments and disability services", the side event discussed some key achievements and challenges in reforming legislation and policies and translating data into policy and program intervention with the adequate level of resourcing needed for reach and coverage in the Pacific.

Participants were able to hear from the region with speakers from the Cook Islands, Nauru, Samoa and Vanuatu as well as commitment from Australia and New Zealand.

Glimpses from the 16th COSP Pacific Side Event



VDPA Office Manager, Nelly Caleb along with Princess Heleina Raukete, Disability Focal Point for the Government of Cook Island and Rioli Deldeab Deduna, Director, Department of People Living with Disability, Government of Nauru - at the Pacific Side event.



From L-R: NOLA National Co-ordinator, Faatino Utumapu sharing updates from Samoa along with Ms Paula Tesoriero, Chief Executive of Whaikaha, Ministry of Disabled People, Head of the New Zealand Delegation to COSP16, Government of New Zealand and Ms. Andrea Cole, Director, Disability Equity and Rights, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of Australia.



PDF delegation led by the CEO at the 16th Conference on State Parties to the UNCRPD at the UN HQ in New York

Three Pacific island countries undertake Parametric Insurance Project

Having a safety net during times of natural disaster is integral for persons with disabilities who are most vulnerable and at risk so much so as the frequency of these events increases in the Pacific.

With the assistance of the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), a project is currently underway in three target countries – Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu to assist persons with disabilities who have incurred heavy financial losses in livelihoods from natural disasters in the three target countries.

Most PDF members do not use parametric insurance products because of the requirements by insurance companies which they do not qualify for.

Due to this, persons with disabilities are also overlooked during humanitarian responses.

During this pilot phase, PDF in partnership with the Organisation of Persons with Disabilities at the country level need to conduct Climate Disaster Risk Financing and Literacy training before proceeding to the registration and onboarding processes.

It is expected that in total, 1500 members from the three countries will be registered and onboarded onto the parametric insurance scheme by the end of 2023.

This project is part of the Pacific Insurance Climate Adaptation Programme on improving the financial preparedness and responses of all Pacific Islanders towards climate change and natural disasters.



OPD members in Tonga signing up for the Parametric Insurance with PDF Secretariat Staff

Pacific achievement and challenges around core policy instruments and disability services.

Having a safety net during times of natural disaster is integral for persons with disabilities who are most vulnerable and at risk so much so as the frequency of these events increases in the Pacific.

With the assistance of the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), a project is currently underway in three target countries – Fiji, Tonga, and Vanuatu to assist persons with disabilities who have incurred heavy financial losses in livelihoods from natural disasters in the three target countries.

Most PDF members do not use parametric insurance products because of the requirements by insurance companies which they do not qualify for.

Due to this, persons with disabilities are also overlooked during humanitarian responses.

During this pilot phase, PDF in partnership with the Organisation of Persons with Disabilities at the country level need to conduct Climate Disaster Risk Financing and Literacy training before proceeding to the registration and onboarding processes.

It is expected that in total, 1500 members from the three countries will be registered and onboarded onto the parametric insurance scheme by the end of 2023.

This project is part of the Pacific Insurance Climate Adaptation Programme on improving the financial preparedness and responses of all Pacific Islanders towards climate change and natural disasters.



OPD members in Tonga signing up for the Parametric Insurance with PDF Secretariat Staff

" Growing Strong Together" - A transformational Journey for OPDs

Growing Stronger Together, a statement coined as the title of the initiative to reflect the aspiration of this journey, aimed to lift the standard of the OPDs, improve and strengthen governance, build, and strengthened capacity, fortify our compliance and above all to reconfirm the relevance of the OPDS as NGOs operating in a very competitive and volatile environment.

Growing Stronger Together is simply improving compliance and meeting the due diligence on our donor partners. However, the process is coined for a more friendly understanding by the OPDs, that they understand what we are aiming to achieve, to build from a strength base approach, for ownership of the process built on trust and complementarity. It is our transformation journey for the next three years.

The process is a program to be carried out across the OPD members who receives core funding and project funding from PDF and extended to all OPD members of the PDF Board who do not receive core or project funding from PDF and OPD as an associate member who receives project funding from PDF.

It is to demonstrate that we are committed to improve our governance and compliance starting at the PDF OPD represented at Board level and cascading to all our OPDs full and associate members who either receives core funding and project funding. Keys Areas of assessment included governance, organisational capacity, staff capacity, compliance, policy, financial management.

This process is pivotal for our members. The transformation journey for the OPD, to lift the standard of OPDs, improve compliance and have a functional efficient and effective OPDs, is a process to strengthen the OPDs for the next 3 years. While this is a due diligence process for donor funding, it is not called 'due diligence' for its donor-centric outlook, the process with the OPD is called "Growing Stronger Together" to encapsulate the essence of the goal of the process, a transformational journey to lift the standard of the OPD, strengthen our governance, grow and build capacity, improve our delivery, tell our story better and improve our convening power through the Leadership training and other training.



From L to R: OPDs in Tuvalu and Samoa undergoing Capacity Building exercises as part of the Transformational Process

Youths get a glimpse into disability issues

On behalf of the Pacific Disability Forum, Programme Officer Telesia Kobiti was given the opportunity to attend the Youth APFSD. The Youth APFSD happens a week prior to the APFSD as a preparatory meeting for youths from the Asia Pacific region that will be attending the actual Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD).

The youth forum brought together 400 young people, activities, and advocates from 36 countries across the Asia-Pacific region. The forum was held in hybrid modality, from 18th - 20th March 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand bringing together diverse individuals aged between 13 – 30. These youths represented youth-led and feminist organizations, organizations of persons with disabilities, changemakers, social entrepreneurs, activists, and students.

The youths spoke to the SDG goals in review:

- SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy
- SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals



The youths also highlighted other goals such as SDG 3 on Health and Well-being, SDG 5 on Gender Equality and SDG 13 on Climate Action. The youth forum offered a safe space for young leaders to come together and share about youth led initiatives in their countries and subregions to achieve sustainable development. Over the course of the 3 days, different youths were chosen as panelists and speak to the goals in the review.

Programme Telesia Kobiti was chosen to speak on the final day of the forum on SDG 9.

Telesia shared with other youths PDF's work on Access Auditing and the most recent audit that was done with the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) whereby 4 youths with disabilities were trained and carry out the audits of the 5 APTC Premises.

The youths were trained on using the audit toolkit, carried out the audit, reported and shared their findings with the APTC Head and GESI team.

Additionally, it was also shared how youths with disabilities can also be agents of change in their communities.



Disability giant called to rest

The Disability Sector in the region has lost a giant of a man.

These are the parting words of the CEO Mr. Setareki Macanawai as he bid farewell to Joshko Wakaniyasi.

“Joshko has run the race and leaves a legacy that we are left to follow after. I acknowledge all of you for spending some time here with us before we say our last farewell and bid our last respects to this giant of a man.”

Joshko Wakaniyasi was the Manager for Inclusive Development at the Pacific Disability Forum and prior to this, he was the Executive Director of Spinal Injuries Association of Fiji.

Joshko as he was affectionately known spent 16 years in the disability sector, focusing on improving the lives of people living with spinal injury and physical impairment then working closely with stakeholders on numerous projects and policies to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

Joshko was laid to rest in March of this year after a short illness. He played an important role in disability advocacy and inclusion by being on the steering committee of United Nations Volunteers, a council member of Fiji National Council of Disabled Persons, a board member of Fiji Council of Social Services and a working group member of the Sustainable Goals Development Fund, amongst others.

Joshko is survived by his two siblings.



From L to R: Joshko with Laisa during the farewell of Christine Conway and the 2nd picture is of Joshko during the 7th Pacific Regional Conference on disability in March of 2023.

Pictures from the field



The CEO of PDF Mr. Setareki Macanawai with UNOHCHR Pacific representative, Ms. Heike Alefsen at the 7th Pacific Regional Conference on Disability



Regional Participants and members of OPS at the 7th Pacific Regional Conference on Disability



Participants from Kiribati at the 7th PRCD leading devotion in Nadi, Fiji



PDF's Director Ops - Laisa Vereti with staff of the Fiji Bureau of Stats doing an awareness session on the WGSS



Mr. Ewen McDonald, Australian High Commissioner opening the 2023 Regional Celebration of the International Day for Persons with Disabilities.



PDF's Emele Kikau showing Media personnel how to provide assistance to persons with disabilities during the UNDIS workshop on disability inclusion