

**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 Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) component of
Research**

April 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 November 2011, the research team undertook activities in Pohnpei, FSM. This was the ninth 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, Tuvalu in September/October 2011 and Kiribati in October 2011. The research team comprised:

- Katabwena Tawaka (PDF)
- Robyn James (APIDS)
- Jessica Lynn and Jayleen Ringlen (Pohnpei Consumers Organization)

The President of the Pohnpei Consumers Organization (PCO), Nelpert Perez, also played an active support role to the team.

This report summarises the process and findings of the research.

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

2. The DPOs in FSM

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

- A history of DPO activity since 2009
- There are two cross-disability DPOs:
 - PCO which was established in 2000 in the state of Pohnpei
 - Pohnpei Women with Disabilities (PWD) was established in 2010
- PCO is a central, registered non-government organisation (NGO) with constitution, elected board, secure office facilities and a vehicle
- PCO has received small amounts of funding from the US Government, Rotary Clubs in Pohnpei and Japan, the Government of FSM, Disability Rights Fund, PDF and APIDS.

2.1 History of DPOs in FSM

When attending a Pacific regional meeting in Papua New Guinea in 2007, Nelpert Perez was introduced to the idea of DPOs. He returned to Pohnpei to work with others to establish the Pohnpei Consumers Organization (PCO) in 2009. PCO was registered as an NGO in 2010.

PCO called women together in 2010 to establish Pohnpei Women with Disabilities. This group, with no funding, last met in 2011. There was discussion during the research about merging the two groups.

Pohnpei is one of the four states of FSM and is the capital. The other states are Chuuk, Yap and Kosrae.

A National Disability Forum in Chuuk in August 2010, attended by representatives from consumer and parent groups (including PCO),

government departments, and state disability advisory groups resolved to call for:

- Government to establish a National Coordinating Council and that State Governments to establish State Disability Coordinating Councils
- The establishment of a national DPO and strengthening of DPOs in each State (objective 1 of National Policy)

A National Coordinating Council has been established but State groups have not yet been chartered.

The Mission of PCO is to protect and promote the human, civil and legal rights of individuals with disabilities through the provision of information and advocacy.

Objectives of PCO include:

- To develop a responsive organisation with requisite resources and financial stability to articulate and pursue the needs and concerns of persons with disabilities in Pohnpei and FSM
- To increase awareness-raising activities on the rights and issues of persons with disability by PCO
- To increase the knowledge and skills of women and girls with disabilities to play leadership roles at local and national levels
- To promote public awareness and awareness amongst employers on employment of persons with disabilities

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 FSM

From 14th to 18th November, 2011, the research team worked together to:

- Develop detailed plans for in-country implementation, giving specific consideration to the FSM context
- 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 with Board and members of PCO and Pohnpei Women with Disabilities:
 - With the aim of identifying the organisation's strengths, capacity development options and how people would like to work with donors and development partners
 - To introduce the strengths based approach concept, on which the research is based and which is relevant to capacity development planning
- Interviews with representatives from Government Departments

A final workshop of members of PCO and PWD 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 provide an initial opportunity for collaborative planning for capacity development of PCO and PWD.

Annex 1 provides the list of research activities each day and people met.

In summary, 16 people participated in meetings, interviews and the workshops. Of these, 9 are women (56%), 7 are men (44%) and 7 (44%) have disabilities. A total of 12 participants (6 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 Friday:

1. Pohnpei Consumers Organization has a Board, legal status as an NGO, a secure office, equipment, internet and telephone and a vehicle
2. PCO Board has shown perseverance to seek support from government and non government organizations; they have strong relationships with government officials and government leaders
3. PCO Board and members have strong parent and family support
4. Through advocacy, PCO has contributed to the development of National Policy, the signing of the CRPD and the establishment of the National Coordinating Council
5. PCO has received funding from Disability Rights Fund and FSM Congress for conducting a survey on identifying people with disabilities
6. There is a Pohnpei Women with Disabilities group that has legal status as an NGO, with plans to merge with PCO

7. PCO has close working relationships with FSM and Pohnpei Departments of Education, FSM Department of Health and Social Affairs, PDF, Disability Rights Fund and APIDS
8. PCO will work closely with:
 - a. The Governor's Office to employ a person with a disability as a Disability Officer
 - b. The Department of Education and Pohnpei Interagency Group in involving adults with a disability in vocational and employment programs e.g. fishing, farming, handicrafts, building
9. PCO will develop a program of activities, including outreach to new people with disabilities and their families, to develop the capacity of members, including advocacy, human rights training, program management, reporting, sign language, income generation and handicrafts
10. PCO Board will develop a strategic plan, revisit by-laws and articles of association and update policies
11. PCO continues to collaborate with the Departments of Education and Health and Social Affairs to identify where people with disabilities can fit into existing programs and to be eligible for funding opportunities
12. PCO would like donors and development partners to act in partnership by funding PCO priorities such as core costs, staff, activities and capacity development activities
13. PCO would like donors and development partners to assist with technical assistance such as training and workshops to be held on island.

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 FSM. Most influencing factors have come from within the organisation, with FSM cultural values being highly significant. Others are related to the international and regional 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, DPOs in FSM have a number of “stand-out” capacity strengths, including:

- the ability to sustain a dream of a barrier-free, rights-based society in FSM
- 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

4.1.2 Contextual influences on DPO capacity

Within FSM 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 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 individual medical, educational and other experts. Until the last few years, there was negligible official or community recognition about the rights of people with disability, including the right to organize themselves.

The FSM Government signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in September 2011, and is working towards ratification.

The National Policy for Disability became a resolution of Congress in 2009.

4.1.3 Advocacy and awareness raising

The major strength of PCO is its focus on building strategic relationships with government leaders and officials. This has meant that PCO has made a significant contribution to development of national policy and the signing of the CRPD by the FSM Government

As one Board member stated: knowing the leaders of the FSM States means we can easily communicate with them and raise issues.

The extent of interaction with Government is illustrated by the comments of several representatives. The Chief of Division of Special Education in the Department of Education illustrated the advocacy ability of Board members of PCO by saying that: *they continually remind us to look at all individuals living with disabilities by reflecting advocacy principles and representing the needs of people with disabilities*. The Gender and Development Officer, Department of Health and Social Affairs said that: *I have learnt a lot from them [PCO]*.

4.1.4 Parent and family support

Parents and family members have a strong presence in PCO and many are members of PCO. The President stated: *in our culture, the whole family is important and should be involved in our DPO*. The concept of a DPO includes the idea that at least the majority of its leaders are people with disabilities, and the PCO in FSM complies with this concept.

4.1.5 External factors which contribute to capacity

Partnerships developed with FSM Government departments, as well as regional and international organisations have contributed to the strengths of PCO in terms of funding and assisting with capacity development activities for Board members.

The attendance by Board members at PDF forums and for a two week attachment at the PDF Office has provided inspiration, support and ideas.

A Board member stated: *as a member and partner of the Pacific Disability Forum and APIDS, we call on them for assistance and consultations, and will continue to do so in the future*.

4.1.6 How DPOs want partners to assist in future

Pohnpei Consumers Organization board and members were clear about their capacity development and funding priorities, as articulated

in the findings. The Board also asserted that funding processes of donors should understand and support this small developing organisation.

Women from PWD stated that they wanted people to assist with training and workshops.

4.2 Summary

This research concludes that:

- PCO is at a very early stage of development and the Board has successfully worked on building the organisation, identifying allies and advocating to government. The next important stage of development for PCO is the involvement of members in activities that contribute to their:
 - Sense of ownership of the organization
 - Understanding of their rights and ability to articulate those rights to their family and community
 - Participation in community and family life

Annex 1: List of research activities

Monday 14th November

Meeting of research team

Tuesday 15th November

Workshop with members

Wednesday 16th November

Interviews with:

- Jane Elymore, Department of Health and Social Affairs
- Arthur Albert, Chief of Division of Special Education, FSM
Department of Education
- Carlina Henry, Special Education Coordinator, Pohnpei State
Department of Education

Friday 18th November

Workshop with members