

**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 Samoa component of Research

August 2011

Contents

1. Introduction.....	3
2. The DPO in Samoa.....	3
2.1 History of the DPO in Samoa	4
3. Research principles, approaches and methodology.....	5
3.1 Methodology in Samoa.....	6
4. Findings	7
4.1 Discussion	9
4.1.1 Model for understanding elements of capacity	10
4.1.2 Contextual influences on DPO capacity	12
4.1.3 Advocacy skills	13
4.1.4 Internal leadership.....	14
4.1.5 Link between members and DPO capacity	15
4.1.6 Link between DPO capacity and communities	15
4.1.7 External factors which contribute to capacity.....	15
4.1.8 NOLAs future capacity development objectives	16
4.1.9 How NOLA wants partners to assist in future	16
4.2 Summary	16
Annex 1: List of research activities.....	18

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 11 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 May 2011, the research team undertook activities in Samoa. This was the third country to be visited, following the pilot study visit to Fiji in February 2011 and research activity in the Cook Islands in March 2011. The research team included one representative each from PDF and APIDS as well as two in-country researchers, the Disability Coordinator, Louise Leauanae and Angie Palepoi, a member of Nuanua O Le Alofa. The Office Manager, Faatino Utumapu also played an active support role to the team.

This report summarises the process, the findings and lessons learned for future aspects of the research.

2. The DPO in Samoa

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

- A history of DPO activity going back to 2001
- There is one national cross-disability DPO – Nuanua O Le Alofa (NOLA)
- NOLA is a central, registered, urban-based non-profit organization with a constitution, an elected board, full-time, part-time, paid and

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

voluntary staff and secure office facilities. It is an organization founded and managed by people with disabilities in Samoa, to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities and to work together to improve their situation in Samoa.

- NOLA has a paid staff of 4
- NOLA has been funded by New Zealand Agency for International Development since 2004 for core staff and operational costs.

2.1 History of the DPO in Samoa

The first provision of disability services began in Samoa in the 1970s. It commenced with special education programs for children with intellectual disabilities and included services later for children with hearing, vision and intellectual impairments. Non-government and charitable organizations have been the main source of influence and providers of services to persons with disabilities in Samoa through special schools, early intervention programs, advocacy activities and vocational training programs.

NOLA was established in 2001 to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities and to work together to improve the situation of all people with disabilities in Samoa.

The current goals and objectives of NOLA are for:

- 1) People with disabilities to be able to gain an income through employment or income generating activities
 - a. To provide vocational training for people with disabilities
 - b. To provide training opportunities in other areas identified by people with disabilities
- 2) People with disabilities to participate in decision making at all levels
 - a. To advocate for and assist in the development of disability friendly legislation and policies
- 3) People with disabilities are able to access buildings, services and equipment
 - a. To increase the number of buildings that are accessible
 - b. To increase the availability of assistive devices

- c. To encourage participation of NOLA members in rural communities in all NOLA & other national events
- 4) NOLA is a well governed and managed organisation with a committed and active membership
 - a. To increase the proportion of NOLA members trained in leadership skills
 - b. To improve communication within the organisation and with the community
 - c. Financial sustainability

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 organizations 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 organizations, 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 DPO-nominated people 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 DPOs 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 organizations)

3.1 Methodology in Samoa

From May 24th to 28th 2011, the research team worked together to:

- Develop detailed plans for in-country implementation, giving specific consideration to the Samoan context
- Identify the questions within each research activity
- Allocate responsibilities among team members
- Undertake the research activities with local organisations in the disability sector and their stakeholders, including meetings and a workshop at the end of the week

- Collate findings at the end of the week of activities and identify lessons about how to improve the research process and methodology for subsequent country visits

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

- Separate meetings were held with the staff and Board members of NOLA
- Interviews with stakeholder groups, including education providers, support services, non-government organisations and government departments

A workshop of members of NOLA was organized on the last day of the in-country visit, for the following purposes:

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

Annex 1 provides the list of research activities each day.

In summary, 57 people participated in meetings, interviews and the workshop. 36 of the participants are women (63%) and 30 (53%) participants have disabilities.

4. Findings

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

1. Nuanua O Le Alofa (NOLA) Board, staff and members are determined to make Samoa a disability inclusive, barrier free society with a key focus on communications with the public to eliminate discrimination
2. NOLA is recognised by the Government of Samoa as the focal point on issues for people with a disability in Samoa
3. NOLA is very successful at advocating for people with disabilities in many areas, including accessing education, employment and training
4. NOLA has some fundraising skills and seeks to identify a member to take ongoing responsibility for future planning and activities
5. NOLA has strong and active leadership at Board and staff level
6. NOLA has capable staff who run the office, inform members about events and training and encourage members to participate in activities
7. NOLA has a strong governance system including a constitution, monthly Board meetings, conducting AGMs, a strategic plan and a transparent financial system
8. NOLA has the confidence of its members
9. NOLA is recognised for its successful awareness activities, including International Day for People with a Disability
10. NOLA has been instrumental in the development of the National Policy for People with Disability
11. NOLA has women's group committee and a youth group
12. NOLA seeks to decentralise its activities more into the rural areas including running training activities in districts and public awareness activities in villages
13. NOLA seeks to further develop skills of its members in fundraising, proposal writing, advocacy, financial management
14. NOLA seeks to make sure that members and staff understand the CRPD, and how to promote it with government and the community
15. NOLA seeks to work closely with stakeholders, such as NGOs, the Church and government, to promote the involvement of people with disabilities in their activities

16. NOLA seeks to inform the public that it advocates for all people with disabilities, including children and people with all types of disabilities
17. NOLA seeks to involve more people with intellectual disabilities and Deaf people
18. NOLA seeks to advocate to government ministries on timely implementation of the National Policy for Persons with a Disability and the proposed Community Sector Plan
19. NOLA seeks to strengthen its networks with policy sections of government ministries
20. NOLA would like donors and development partners to act in partnership and be more flexible in their proposal requirements and reporting processes
21. NOLA would like donors and development partners to fund an exchange program within DPOs across the region and internationally – to learn skills such as working with government
22. NOLA would like donors and development partners to share their expertise and knowledge by providing technical support, including suitable volunteers
23. NOLA would like donors and development partners to provide support according to priorities identified by people with disabilities in Samoa

At the workshop the finding, *NOLA has adequate resources including an office, office equipment, a van, committed Board, staff and members*, was presented and rejected. The reasons given by members for the rejection of this finding included the following:

- there is no appropriate office equipment for members who are Blind or Deaf
- there is no lift for the van
- not all Board and staff are seen as being committed.

4.1 Discussion

This research attempted to understand perceptions of DPO capacity by DPOs 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. This section discusses the findings listed above, within an understanding of the history of NOLA and broader capacity development thinking.

In summary, NOLA has many strengths in capacity terms and there are a number of factors which have contributed to DPO capacity in Samoa. Most influencing factors have come from within the organization itself, and other factors reflect Samoan values or are related to the international disability rights movement.

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 organization and its work are completely “owned” by the organization 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 organizations 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 organizations)
- the ability to manage diversity (to make the most of different ideas from people and strengths within the organization)

- 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, NOLA has a number of “stand-out” capacity strengths, including:

- the ability and willingness to persevere, particularly during times of exclusion and lack of support from others
- the ability to sustain a dream of a barrier-free, rights-based society in Samoa
- the ability to make sure office bearers and staff are committed to working hard towards the shared goals
- the ability to take ownership of the disability rights agenda
- the ability to be determined to achieve their goals and in particular to meet members’ priorities
- the ability to earn the trust of others, including members, communities, other NGOs and donors/partners
- the ability to combine political neutrality and assertive advocacy
- the ability to improve individual and organisational learning, particularly by maximizing opportunities for members to attend training, workshops, committee meetings etc.
- the ability to build connections

4.1.2 Contextual influences on DPO capacity

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

The Government of Samoa launched the Samoa National Policy for Persons with Disabilities in February 2011. The mission is to *create a rights based, inclusive and barrier free society which advocates for and empowers people with disabilities*. The seven core outcome areas are:

1. Advocacy and awareness
2. Early detection and intervention
3. Independent living and economic development
4. Provision of support, health services and assistive devices
5. Education (training, sports, recreation)
6. Access (information, transport, built environment)
7. Women with disabilities

The action plan includes the creation of the position of Senior Disability Officer to lead a Disability Unit in the Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development. This role will become the national focal point for Government, and will work towards the Samoan Government signing and ratification of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities.

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

NOLA has attracted support in the form of a support from international volunteers, grants from New Zealand Agency for International Development and grants from other international development organizations such as the Canada Fund and APIDS. It has also accessed additional funds and training through PDF.

A recent workshop to raise awareness of disability rights implemented by the Australian Human Rights Commission and PDF has been a source of information, confidence and skill for NOLA.

In this context, NOLA capacity has gradually increased overall since 2001.

4.1.3 Advocacy skills

Advocacy skills of Board and staff are seen as being a significant strength by staff, Board, as well as NGO and Government Ministry representatives. *NOLA is a mouthpiece for people with disabilities and is seen as the main focal point for people with a disability.*

The Samoan Government has included people with disabilities in ad hoc committees and in CEDAW consultations. This is perceived as a show of respect for the rights of people with disabilities. The fact that the Samoan Government selected NOLA's Office Coordinator as the NGO representative to attend the Universal Periodic Review Committee meeting

in Geneva in May 2011 was seen as an example of the recognition by Government of skills within NOLA.

One NGO representative highlighted that NOLA is *always willing to work in partnership. They have the strength to voice out what they need with few resources.* Another NGO leader said that *NOLA members contribute at a high quality level in consultations and workshops and for everyone not just for people with disabilities. They show that people with disability can do better than people without disability.* One NGO representative commented that *NOLA bring things into the light; it was dark in the past but they are [now] bringing in the light.*

A Government Ministry representative said that *they have a good relationship with Government and their knowledge on law and legislation has increased.*

Another Government representative noted that NOLA worked with Government to identify that there was no direct provision for people with disabilities in employment legislation such as the Labor and Employment Act 1972, Occupational Safety Act 2002 and the Public Holiday Act. The NOLA President advocated to the Labor Minister in 2010 for changes that are currently in draft form.

One of the outcomes of this advocacy is that more people with disabilities are getting work and there are more opportunities in education. Thus the advocacy is having a direct effect on members' lives.

4.1.4 Internal leadership

For ten years, NOLA has been led by a number of dedicated leaders. One Board member stated *it is personal – we start with what we have. Our determination is our strength.*

Board and staff believe that the commitment and dedication of NOLA's leadership has ensured that there are well established systems such as financial accountability, policies and procedures, strategic plan and a work plan.

Board members are actively engaged in the work of NOLA.

4.1.5 Link between members and DPO capacity

NOLA staff identified strong membership as an important strength of the organisation. *There are approximately 100 registered members who come to activities. We utilise the expertise of members who have skills and knowledge which benefits the organisation as a whole*

NOLA ensures that training opportunities are made available to members as well as staff and Board. For example, five members and one member of staff are part of an Australian Leadership Award Fellowship group spending one month in Melbourne developing their skills in 2011.

4.1.6 Link between DPO capacity and communities

NOLA Board, staff and members acknowledge the importance of family and community in their lives. Staff identified the support of families, stakeholders and government as being an important source of strength.

Stakeholders say that NOLA set high standards in their awareness activities. A Government representative stated that *the NOLA awareness program has brought awareness to Samoa as a whole. They also organise the International Day in December and encourage all public servants to join in.*

Continuing increased public and family awareness of the rights and talents of people with disabilities is seen by many to be critical. Two NGO representatives identified the *need to explore ways to improve working together to change attitudes.*

4.1.7 External factors which contribute to capacity

NOLA places value on the contributions made to their organizations from others within Samoa and beyond.

International ongoing funding since 2004 ensures that NOLA has paid staff with an office and resources from which to conduct advocacy activities and to support members.

Board and staff highlighted the importance of attendance at regional and international forums. *We meet other leaders and development partners and learn from them and get support.* (staff member)

Attending regional meetings has increased my skills. (Board member)

4.1.8 NOLAs future capacity development objectives

NOLA board, staff and members and NGO and Government Ministry representatives were positive about the current strengths of NOLA. There were many suggestions for continuing to strengthen capacity as listed in the findings summary (See Section 4 above).]

4.1.9 How NOLA wants partners to assist in future

Board and staff of NOLA are clear about their wish for significant changes in the processes involved in seeking, attracting and reporting on funding. They suggest that guidelines be simplified: *they are very complicated and requirements are too high.* Flexibility in all processes is important, with a stronger negotiating role for NOLA in determining funding priorities and the methods and timelines of reporting on activities and expenditure. A partnership model is preferred, where both parties are involved in negotiations about appropriate processes.

Technical support provided by partners is valued by NOLA. *We would like our development partners to share their expertise and knowledge.*

Board and staff consider an important contributor to NOLA capacity is opportunities to learn from similar contexts. For example they encourage donors to *fund an exchange program within DPOs across the region to learn skills such as working with government – especially Fiji and Vanuatu.*

4.2 Summary

This research concludes that:

- NOLA has made considerable progress in terms of developing a sound organisation over the last decade

- NOLA has a solid foundation of capacity on which they can continue to build to achieve their objectives
- In 2011, using strengths based approaches and cross-referencing, this research process identified both *perceptions* within NOLA that they have considerable capacity strengths and the *reality* of these strengths, particularly their strong commitment to disability rights and a shared belief in a better future for people with disability
- Recognition of DPO capacity strengths contributed to a heightened sense of shared motivation among Board, staff and members of NOLA, a healthy confidence and a realistic understanding about the pathways ahead
- Samoan DPOs are interested in partnerships which contribute to their ongoing capacity strengthening processes and which are based on mutual respect, understanding of the Samoan context and negotiated processes of funding.

Annex 1: List of research activities

May 24th 2011

Meeting with staff of NOLA – Faatino Utumapu, Angie Palepoi, Louise Leauanae, Sa Utielesolo

Meeting with Board members of NOLA – Nofovaleane Mapusua, Milovale Lama, Mathew Lemisio, Mailo Sio

May 25th 2011

Interviews with special school representatives:

- Loto Taumafai School
- Samoa Society for the Blind (PREB)
- Samoa Society for the Intellectually Handicapped (IHC)
- Aoga Fiamalamalama Senese School – Donna Lene and four staff members

Interviews with service provider representatives:

- Faataua le Ola
- Samoa AIDS Foundation

May 26th 2011

Interviews with service provider representatives:

- Mapusaga
- Women in Business
- Samoa Umbrella Organisation for NGOs – Roina Faatauvaavavatau

Interviews with representatives from Samoan Government Ministries:

- Ministry of Women
- Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Labor
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Works

May 27th 2011

Interview with representative from Public Service Commission – Moira Avalii-Vitale

Interviews with donor agency representatives:

- Civil Society Support Program (CSSP) – Manu Chan
- New Zealand Aid Program – Theresa Masoe-Taimalelagi

May 28th 2011

Workshop with NOLA members