



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM



Pacific
Disability
Forum

Seventh Pacific Regional Conference on Disability

“Nothing Without us: Deepening partnerships for an inclusive and equitable Blue Pacific Continent for persons with disabilities.”

OUTCOME DOCUMENT

Women with Disabilities

The women’s half day forum during the 7th (Seventh) Pacific Regional Conference on Disability brought women with disabilities from all over the region together to discuss our different priorities, highlight our challenges and suggest some recommendations for progressing the work for women with disabilities in the region for the next two to three years.

This outcome statement has been derived from the outcome statements from each subregion which were compiled after their respective online sessions.

1. Political participation

In the Pacific culture, women are often not consulted and present in decision making spaces. Therefore, women with disabilities are doubly discriminated first due to their gender and second because of their disability. In addition, women with disabilities often do not get to exercise their voting rights due to accessibility issues and the lack of information and understanding of their rights and the voting systems in their respective countries.

We, women with disabilities, including girls with disabilities, reaffirm our call for better participation in political participation, representation, and inclusion. We demand for our inclusion and consultation at decision making spaces and for our voices to be heard and issues considered. We feel that more empowerment and capacity building is needed especially in governance, knowledge on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and financial literacy to enable us to become better advocates and leaders.

2. Services for mental health and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Women and girls with disabilities continue to be left behind when accessing health services, including mental health as well as sexual and reproductive health services and information. This has led to the discrimination they experience to be further exacerbated through attitudinal barriers and the lack of awareness of service providers.

Women with disabilities experience discrimination and lack of access to appropriate medical care throughout pregnancy, during and post birth due to stigma and lack of understanding of their specific needs.

We reiterate the need for service providers receiving disability sensitization training, including for maternal health services, mental health interventions, sexual and reproductive health, and rights services. There is a need for informational training and resources to be made available for women with disabilities in the region.

3. Economic Empowerment

Women with disabilities continue to face challenges with securing employment and sustaining a livelihood sufficient to provide for their families. The lack of education, income generating skills and knowledge and opportunities has further worsened the situation for them.

We acknowledge the work that has been done so far with stakeholders, OPDs and women's groups in this area but we feel that more needs to be done to reach as many women as possible. We request for targeted trainings for established women's subgroups within the OPDs as well as women OPDs on economic empowerment activities that they could perform to earn a living for themselves and their families. We also recommend the creation of education opportunities of women with disabilities who do not have the opportunity to attend school to have a formal education so as to improve their prospects of being employed.

4. Establishment and Strengthening of Women's' Subgroups

We recognize the strong leadership that is already among women with disabilities throughout the Pacific that needs to be supported and enhanced. Some countries have established their women with disabilities subgroups within their OPDs while others have yet to do so. In most instances, more need to be done to strengthen and sustain these groups. Challenges encountered include the lack of knowledge and skills on good governance, finance literacy and the knowhow and ability to secure funding to carry out activities for the women groups.

We recommend that PDF and all partners in their strategic plans have an outcome for the realization of the rights of women with disabilities. Specifically, we recommend these Women's' subgroups receive appropriate training on governance, leadership, and finance literacy to support and sustain and progress of their women's groups.

We also reiterate the need for capacity building for the women on how to use the UNCRPD as an advocacy tool to ensure effective advocacy to government and other stakeholders on the effective and full inclusion and participation of women with disabilities in the region. Ending violence against women and girls with disabilities.

5. Ending violence against women and girls with disabilities

Women and girls with disabilities across the Pacific are exposed to gender-based violence at a greater rate than the rest of the population. Strategies to combat gender-based violence must have women and girls with disabilities included in all phases from planning to implementation and evaluation.

We recommend that PDF and all partners continue and expand efforts to support OPDs to carry out research, mobilise resources and advocate to end all forms of gender-based violence. We recommend specific interventions delivered for women and girls with disabilities to address their increased risk and experience of gender-based violence across the Pacific as well as inclusion within mainstream activities.

We recommend those working to combat GBV, including governments and international organisations, to partner with OPDs and specifically women's subgroups to development and implement effective interventions for reducing and eliminating violence.

6. Women in DRR, Climate change and WASH

With the increase in frequency and intensity of natural disasters in the region, women and girls with disabilities have become increasingly affected and to an extent left behind in terms of preparedness, early warning systems, response, and recovery efforts. Women and girls with disabilities are discriminated due to their gender, their impairment and for most their cultures which prevents them from being included in terms of consultations and decision making.

We demand that we are included in the spaces of consultation and decision making and that we can speak on our issues and our voices are heard. We believe that if this does not occur, our issues and we will continue to be left in the periphery.

In addition, we continue to advocate for accessible and safe evacuation centers that prioritise accessible and safe wash facilities as well as the availability of dignity kits and measures ensuring the protection of women and girls from abuse and harm.