

## Preconditions to Inclusion Issues Paper:

# Introduction to the Pacific Disability Forum's Preconditions Framework

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## What are the Preconditions to Inclusion in the Pacific?

The Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) estimates that 1.708 million people in Pacific Island Countries and Territories (PICTs) live with disability. These people experience some of the highest forms of exclusion and discrimination across the Pacific, as seen in data showing that they are over-represented among those living in poverty and under-represented in social and public life, including in national decision-making. Women with disabilities face particular barriers: for example, experiencing higher rates of physical and sexual violence, forced treatments, and having their first child at younger ages than women without disabilities or men with disabilities. School attendance and economic participation rates are lower for persons with disabilities, and they are more likely to have bad experiences in health systems.<sup>1</sup>

This pervasive and entrenched exclusion and marginalisation of persons with disabilities must be addressed in order for persons with disabilities to access their full rights under the UN Convention of the Rights of Persons with disabilities (CRPD). Doing so is essential, not only as a matter of rights and equity but also for the sake of social and economic progress for persons with disabilities, and for their communities that will benefit from their contributions when their equal participation is facilitated.

The last decade has seen much progress in the aid sector in terms of 'mainstreaming' disability inclusion into development and humanitarian programs. This work is commendable and should be continued at pace if we are to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind, particularly given the many issues affecting the region, ranging from climate change to ageing populations, digital economies and more. In particular it has been excellent and commendable to see increased good practices around participation of persons with disabilities in international cooperation decision-making, in accordance with their rights under Articles 4.3 and 32 of the CRPD.

At PDF, however, we have also long recognised and advocated that mainstreaming within programs and policies is not enough. For all persons with disabilities, particularly the most

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<sup>1</sup> Data and statistics drawn from M. Sharp, Pacific Group on Disability Statistics (PGDS), Background on PGDS Presentation, SPC, 16 July 2020, <https://www.washingtongroup-disability.com/fileadmin/uploads/wg/Documents/20-8b.pdf>

marginalised, to be able to have any chance of being included within mainstream activities, there needs to be increased and intentional focus on the systemic barriers in communities that prevent them from reaching such activities in the first place. These systemic barriers include discrimination in attitudes and in practices, lack of accessibility, no access to assistive technology or support services, no community-based inclusive development to facilitate inclusion, and exclusion due to the extra costs of disabilities.

At PDF we have begun calling for policies to address these core barriers called the ‘preconditions to inclusion’ – because without policies and programs in place to address these, many persons with disabilities would be excluded from any other activities that would enable their inclusion, such as inclusive education or inclusive health activities. Our framework aligns with similar frameworks; for example, the report on disability-inclusive policies by the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities outlines non-discrimination, accessibility and assistive technology and support services as prerequisites for the Sustainable Development Goals and the CRPD.

We have adapted our model for our Pacific context. The additional costs of disability are pervasively prohibitive for many persons with disabilities in the region: particularly where there is such a lack of health insurance, public transport or subsidised costs of items such as assistive technology or care, together with such high indirect costs of disability due to low employment rates of persons with disabilities. Together, this means that action addressing the additional costs of disability, through social protection, is seen by us as an essential precondition to facilitate entry-point inclusion for persons with disabilities in the Pacific.

Similarly, we have understood that meaningful inclusion depends also on communities being resourced and equipped to include their members with disabilities. This is particularly so in the Pacific, given the unique geographical challenges – where populations are often dispersed across vast areas and islands – and the varying amounts of resources available in different places. This all creates significant barriers to service delivery and community engagement.

We also know that across the Pacific, the people and the community are always one of our greatest potential resources, and the key is finding the way to mobilise this towards disability inclusion where needed. CBID fosters local support networks and ensures that inclusive policies reach individuals at the community level, and for this reason we have identified that CBID is also an essential precondition, particularly in our context. This precondition emphasises that programs and national policies should mobilise, be adaptable to and build upon the Pacific’s diverse and community-level context to ensure effective inclusion of persons with disabilities.

## Role of preconditions in the Pacific

The preconditions are more than a mere checklist; it reflects an interdependent policy and programming framework where each component reinforces the others. Accessibility alone is insufficient if assistive technologies are not also in place, and CBID is often required to deliver assistive technologies. Similarly, non-discrimination policies are vital, but without CBID and support services, they remain theoretical ideals rather than practical realities. PDF emphasises that the success of the framework relies on treating the six preconditions as

interwoven elements, each strengthening the overall approach to disability inclusion. This holistic view underscores the need for governments, organisations, and stakeholders to adopt an inclusive policy model that addresses all of these multiple dimensions of disability rights in a coordinated manner.

The framework should be used to analyse and identify where there are core policy and programming gaps, and prioritise actions to address these. Similarly, the framework can be used to identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration between stakeholders on similar 'precondition' work.

## Preconditions under the CRPD

Non-discrimination, accessibility, assistive technology and support services are high-lighted as core CRPD General Obligations under Article 4. Social protection is also a right under Article 28, non-discrimination is further covered under Articles 3 and 5, accessibility under Articles 3 and 9, Assistive Technology under Articles 9, 20 and 26, and community support services under Article 19.

## Current status of preconditions to inclusion in the Pacific

Despite PDF's advocacy efforts over recent years, there have been challenges in achieving widespread adoption of the preconditions framework within Pacific policies. While there has been progress under some of the components themselves, PDF continues to strongly advocate for Pacific Island Country and Territory (PICT) governments, donors, multilateral organisations and other stakeholders to adopt the preconditions as an overall framework to guide their policy and programming strategies, decision-making and coordination. Doing so would pave the way for greater equity and agency for persons with disabilities in the Pacific, by removing barriers to facilitate their more equal participation in communities and mainstream programs in accordance with their rights.

## Key recommendations for preconditions in the Pacific

- **More governments, donors and other stakeholders to adopt preconditions as a framework.** This could include adopting within national policies and strategies, diplomatic agendas, coordination collaboration, undertaking situational analysis using the framework, etc. This paper notes that the UNPRPD does use the framework, and that the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) uses a similar framework.

### Accessibility

- The *Pacific Regional Accessibility Blueprint* regarding the built environment is under development. Once publicly endorsed, adopt these within national regulatory frameworks.
- Train national delegations of professionals, OPDs, and government representatives (particularly at the sub-national level) on how to use and monitor the *Pacific Regional Accessibility Blueprint* regarding the built environment.

- Develop a regional process for monitoring the implementation of the *Pacific Regional Accessibility Blueprint* regarding the built environment by PICTs, involving OPD representatives, government and other key stakeholders.
- Establish a regional taskforce to identify and mobilise action on strategic opportunities for accelerating accessible transport and infrastructure in the Pacific, building on the analysis and recommendations in the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility report *Improving Accessibility in Transport Infrastructure Projects in the Pacific Islands*<sup>2</sup>.
- Commission a report to undertake a situational analysis on accessibility of information and communications across the region, including websites.
- Outline regional information and communications accessibility standards for the Pacific, which could then be tailored by countries when developing their own national standards.

### **Assistive technology**

- Review existing tax regulations and promote exemptions or concessions for assistive products and technology across the region.
- Establish a regional procurement facility, in line with the recommendations of the WHO *Assistive Technology Procurement Study* to address the shortage of quality and affordable assistive products and technology across the region.
- Develop support from national governments and partners for training for multi-disciplinary personnel in relation to assistive products and technology, and integrated health and rehabilitation services, to ensure improved access and safe and appropriate use by persons with disabilities.

### **Community-based inclusive development (CBID)**

- Link CBID to disaster risk reduction through systematic mechanisms (such as national policies, international frameworks, and national and international funding allocations) to ensure that progress being achieved on a programmatic level is embedded sustainably.
- Support an initiative to identify a new action plan and budget commitment to continue strengthening CBID in the Pacific, focused on particular barriers such as resourcing, improving coordination between government ministries, accessing regional and remote areas, and workforce planning.

### **Non-discrimination**

- Ensure that disability is mainstreamed into all other sectoral laws, particularly anti-discrimination legislation and policies.
- Include non-discrimination terms and provisions in partner and donor funding arrangements and investments, including adequate provisions to address the need for reasonable accommodations.

<sup>2</sup> Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility. ND. Improving Accessibility in Transport Infrastructure Projects in the Pacific Islands. [https://www.theprif.org/sites/default/files/documents/prif\\_transport\\_report\\_web.pdf](https://www.theprif.org/sites/default/files/documents/prif_transport_report_web.pdf)

- Ensure the right to legal capacity, including by increasing efforts towards deinstitutionalisation, in accordance with the CRPD's Guidelines on De-Institutionalisation, Including in Emergencies.<sup>3</sup>
- Ensure adequate budgetary allocations to enable full implementation of non-discrimination policies and practices, including budgets for reasonable accommodations, awareness-raising, and targeted strategies focusing on those experiencing multiple and intersecting discrimination.

### **Social protection**

- Support all countries in the region to adopt disability-specific support benefits and allowances based on good practices in the region, including protecting the right to work, and to embed these in relevant policies, legislation, and budgets.
- Develop social protection schemes that support children with disabilities and their families.
- Establish schemes that enable persons with disabilities to access social welfare assistance automatically in the event of natural disasters, without having to provide evidence of hardship.

### **Support services**

- Invest in a pilot program that can be scalable in relation to support services.
- Implement recommendations of the 'Deaf People in Pacific Island Countries' report.

### **Further resources:**

Pacific Disability Forum, 2023, [Conference Discussion Paper](#), PDF.

UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2015, [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities](#), United Nations,

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), n.d., [Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainability Development Goals: Foundations](#), OHCHR.

United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), n.d., [The preconditions necessary to ensure disability inclusion](#), UNPRPD.

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<sup>3</sup> Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. 2022. Guidelines on deinstitutionalization, including in emergencies. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/legal-standards-and-guidelines/crpd5-guidelines-deinstitutionalization-including>