PACIFIC WOMEN LEAD

Guidance Note 1:
Reporting on Disability Inclusion

PC: Women's Fund Fiji

Background

The World Health Organisation estimates that 16% of any population experiences disability.[1] In the Pacific, that's approximately 1.7 million people. Many people with disabilities are socially, politically and economically marginalised and, due to barriers to their participation, may be unable to access essential services such as water, sanitation and hygiene, health services and education. Less than 10% of all children with disabilities in the region attend school, compared to 70% of children who do not have a disability. The rate of unemployment for people with disabilities in the region ranges from 50% to 90%.[2] Poverty and disability are closely linked, with people with disabilities experiencing greater economic disadvantage compared to those without a disability.[3]

Fourteen out of 15 Pacific Island countries have ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The CRPD commits countries to promoting and progressively realising the rights of people with disabilities. Article 6 specifically focuses on women and girls with disabilities. In line with the CRPD, Governments in the region have jointly adopted the 2016-2025 Pacific Framework on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent[4] includes 'partnership and cooperation', and 'inclusion and equity' as 2 of its 5 core strategic pathways that ensure all Pacific peoples, including persons with disabilities, lead free, safe, healthy, and productive lives.

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1   WHO. (2023). Disability Factsheet. https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health accessed 10th August 2023
2   Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. (2022). Second Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report 2022. Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat: Suva, Fiji.
3   Groce N, Kett M, Lanh R & Trani JF. (2011). Disability and poverty: The need for a more nuanced understanding of implications for development policy and practice. In Third World Quarterly, Vol. 32, Issue 8.
4   Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. (2022). 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent. Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat: Suva, Fiji.

Objective

This guidance note aims to support Pacific Women Lead partners to strengthen reporting of their efforts to support the realisation of the rights of women and girls with disabilities.

Pacific Women Lead

The goal of Pacific Women Lead (PWL) is for Pacific women and girls, in all their diversity, to be safe and equitably share in resources, opportunities and decision-making with men and boys. In alignment with the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018–2030, PWL seeks to support women in all their diversity, including women and girls with disabilities.[5]

PWL works across three thematic outcome areas, with the following end-of-program outcomes:

Women's leadership promoted

- Women and girls' voice: More women and girls, in all their diversity are respected, listened to and influence decision-making at all levels and spheres (community, provincial, national, public and private)
- Pacific feminist civil society: the Pacific feminist movement has grown in depth, is better connected, and their expertise is drawn upon by Pacific partners.

Women's rights realised

- Women and adolescent girls have improved access to quality health care services, especially sexual and reproductive health
- Women's safety: violence against women and children is reduced and survivors of gender-based violence have access to quality support services, including in times of disasters
- Women's economic empowerment: diverse women have more equitable access to resilient economic opportunities, including increased voice in economic decision making.

Partners are supported to increase Pacific ownership and effectiveness of regional gender equality efforts:

- Pacific ownership and regional effectiveness: There is robust engagement, cooperation and mutual sharing between regional agencies and intergovernmental organisations to deliver on gender equality commitments
- Gender mainstreaming: Pacific governments and development partners are implementing programs and policies that support gender equality.

Each of PWL's end of program outcomes intends to reach women and girls with disabilities. This requires mainstreaming of disability across the program outcome areas and monitoring and reporting on efforts.

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5   Pacific Community. (2017). Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights 2018 – 2030.

Disability

The CRPD describes people with disabilities as those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Disability arises not from impairment (i.e., problems in body functions or structures) alone, but from the interaction between a person's impairment and the barriers faced to full participation on an equal basis with others.

Barriers to participation can include:

- **Attitudinal** (stigmatising or discriminatory attitudes towards people with disabilities),
- **Environmental** (barriers to accessibility in the built environment, transport and infrastructure),
- **Institutional** (exclusion of people with disabilities from meetings, discriminatory laws, policies and practices, lack of reasonable accommodation),
- **Communication** (inaccessible written or verbal information), and
- **Lack of resourcing** for disability inclusion.

Disability Access and Inclusion

Literacy rates are **LOWER** amongst women with disabilities.[6]

Laws and policies addressing gender equality have traditionally **IGNORED** the rights of women with disabilities.

Gender Equality Laws & Policies

Women with disabilities experience gender-based violence with women and girls with disabilities being **2-3** times more likely to face physical or sexual abuse.[8]

Due to barriers to participation, people with disabilities are routinely excluded from opportunities available to the rest of the population. Women and girls with disabilities fare worse than men with disabilities. In several Pacific countries, women with disabilities have had less access to education and paid work compared to men with disabilities. Literacy rates are lower amongst women with disabilities compared to men with disabilities.[6]

Social norms, stigma and discrimination prevent many women and girls with disability from participating in opportunities across many areas of life. Systemic barriers and exclusion lead to lower economic and social status, including lower civic and political participation. Laws and policies addressing gender equality have traditionally ignored the rights of women with disability.

6 Samoa Bureau of Statistics, Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development, Pacific Community and UNICEF Pacific. (2018). Samoa Disability Report: An analysis of 2016 Census of Population and Housing. UNICEF, Suva; UNICEF Pacific, Kiribati National Statistics Office and Pacific Community. (2017). Disability Monograph: From the 2015 Population and Housing Census. UNICEF, Suva; Tonga Statistics Department. (2019). Disability in Tonga: Analysis of the situation of people with disability based on the 2016 Population and Housing Census; UNICEF Pacific, Office of Planning & Statistics and Pacific Community. (2017) Palau Disability Report: An analysis of 2015 Census of Population, Housing and Agriculture. UNICEF, Suva.

A series of studies by Organisations for Persons with Disability (OPDs) and UNFPA across the region found that many women with disabilities face insurmountable barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services.[7] Women with disabilities are especially at risk of experiencing gender-based violence, with women and girls with disabilities being 2–3 times more likely to face physical or sexual abuse.[8] Policies to address this exist but lack implementation strategies. Service providers and families often make decisions on behalf of people with disabilities, minimising voice and autonomy. Social attitudes can sometimes condone or normalise violence against women and girls with disabilities.

The realisation of the rights of people with disabilities requires supports to be made available to assist in overcoming barriers to participation. These supports are a precondition which enable women and girls with disabilities to also experience positive outcomes as a result of PWL. Supporting preconditions requires both human and financial resources and technical skills.

To ensure women and girls with disabilities benefit on an equal basis with others from PWL initiatives, it is important to monitor the provision of preconditions for people with disabilities, as well as the extent to which they have been included in PWL activities and benefited from them. This requires the collection of data about women and girls with disabilities. Knowing your target population, ensuring that it includes women and girls with disabilities and collecting data on both your project's reach (quantitative) and impact (qualitative) regarding people with disabilities will give you confidence that you are working towards the realisation of the rights of people with disabilities.

Monitoring the Journey Towards the Realisation of Rights

The journey towards the realisation of rights has several steps.

Exclusion occurs when people with disabilities are not included, not considered, left out of discussions or initiatives, or unable to participate due to a failure to provide reasonable accommodations.

Preconditions refer to the pre-requisites that underpin disability inclusion and participation, enabling it to occur. Preconditions can vary depending on systemic and structural barriers within the context. Monitoring preconditions requires reporting on the enablers provided. These may include:

- Access to support services
- Accessible venues or facilities
- Accessible information and communication
- Access to assistive devices
- Access to social protection
- Non-discrimination.

Inclusion occurs when people with disabilities are part of activities and initiatives, for example attending meetings, workshops, and training. Monitoring this requires disability disaggregated data. PWL's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework contains guidance for disability data collection and use.

Participation is deeper and reflects the active and meaningful engagement of people with disabilities in discussion and decision-making. Meaningful engagement means there is a true shift in power dynamics and social norms, the perspectives and opinions of people with disabilities are listened to and respected, and people with disabilities experience equal outcomes. Monitoring this requires collection and reporting of qualitative data to demonstrate change.

Supporting preconditions, inclusion and participation to assist in overcoming unfair or unjust inequity caused by structural and systemic barriers contributes towards the achievement of rights. The inclusion and participation of people with disabilities and representative groups, OPDs is critical throughout this process.

7   United Nations Population Fund, Women Enabled International, Pacific Disability Forum. (2021). Women and young people with disabilities in Samoa: Needs assessment of sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and access to essential services; United Nations Population Fund, Women Enabled International, Pacific Disability Forum. (2022). Women and young people with disabilities in Vanuatu: Needs assessment of sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and access to essential services; United Nations Population Fund, Women Enabled International, Pacific Disability Forum. (2022). Women and young people with disabilities in Fiji: Needs assessment of sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence, and access to essential services.
8   Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. (202). Second Quadrennial Pacific Sustainable Development Report 2022. Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat: Suva, Fiji.

Reporting on Disability Inclusion

PWL reporting has to date focused more heavily on the preconditions made available to participants with disabilities. While this is important, reporting on inclusion and participation is also needed, to demonstrate the impact of the application of preconditions and progress towards the realisation of rights.

The diagram below provides examples and scenarios to consider when reporting on disability inclusion.

REALISATION OF RIGHTS

EXCLUSION

Reporting on
Preconditions

- Provision of:
  - » Accessible venues
  - » Sign language interpreters
  - » Screen-reading software
  - » Personal support workers
  - » Information in accessible formats
  - » Referrals to assistive device providers
  - » Referrals to social protection schemes
- Partnership with OPDs.

Reporting on
Inclusion
(Quantitative)

- Number of people with diverse disabilities attending an event, meeting or joining a club
- Number of people with disabilities receiving a service
- Number of OPDs participating in meetings or events
- Number of people with disabilities enrolled in qualifications
- Number of people with disabilities involved in policy development
- Representation of disability in policies, information or initiatives

Reporting on
Participation
(Qualitative)

- Perspectives from people with disabilities who took on leadership roles: what changed as a result?
- Perspectives from people with disabilities who received SRH / GBV services: How did these meet needs?
- Evidence of people with disabilities speaking up at forums, or actively participating in planning, steering or advisory meetings, and how this has influenced outcomes.
- Perspectives from people with disabilities who have participated in business development opportunities: how has this changed things?