



Disability Inclusive Development (DID) - Cook Islands

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DID Policy 2014 - 2019 launched

The Disability Inclusive Development Policy 2014-2019 was launched on the 13th of October 2015 by the Hon. Minister of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs, & Minister for Disability, Albert Nicholas, during the Pacific Disability Rights framework & Inclusive Education Consultation at the University of the South Pacific.

The Policy was developed following a review of the Disability Policy in 2013. This Policy contains a DID National Action Plan that is aligned to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) which will help guide the work of the Disability stakeholders including the Disability Centers in the Pa Enua.

Following the launch, the Pacific Disability Rights framework was facilitated by the Disability Coordination Officer of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Mr. Laisiasa Merumeru & CEO of Pacific Disability Forum, Mr. Setareki Macanawai.



Participants of the Pacific Disability Rights Framework & Inclusive Education Consultation during the launch of the DID Policy 2014- 2019, at the University of the South Pacific, Avarua.

Mangaia receives Disability Gift

The Island of Mangaia received a Disability gift from the Australian government in commemoration of the Cook Islands 50th Anniversary Celebrations of self governance.

Due to the vast distance between the villages on the island, the Mangaian disability community were facing difficulties in bringing their people together on the program days at the Centre.

The provision of this Mini van comes as a solution to this issue as it will be put to good use by the Disability community, including the elderly on Mangaia.



The Mini Van on its arrival on Rarotonga before it was shipped over to Mangaia in November.

Atiu disability stakeholders trained

Atiuan Disability community went through a three day CRPD training. It was an enlightening experience for the participants as they reflected on their disability community in Atiu.

As a result, the participants were able to develop an Action Plan for the island with a vision "Total freedom from the threshold of disabilities to the fullness of capabilities through loving empowerment."

From this vision their mission stated "Ours is a community of love, empowering the powerless, marginalized and stigmatized through acceptance, respect & equal treatment without discrimination, enabling them to participate in any given opportunity in all aspects of life and enjoy their basic necessities".



Training participants with their Certificates of participation after the training in Atiu.

During a group discussion during the CRPD training in Atiu

"Ours is a community of love, empowering the powerless, marginalized and stigmatized through acceptance, respect & equal treatment without discrimination, enabling them to participate in any given opportunity in all aspects of life and enjoy their basic necessities".

Children learn about the Inclusion



The children of Mauke School had the opportunity to learn about Inclusion and which is a concept derived from the partnership between the Disability Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Just Play Program with the Cook Islands Football Association.

This was taken to the Island of Mauke & children were excited to learn about respecting one another and accepting one another's differences and similarities.

This concept was well accepted by both teachers and students of Mauke School.

Metua Davey wins Award

Metua Davey of Aitutaki was a recipient of the Entrepreneurial Award or the Te Ata Marama Award at the Meitaki Attitude Awards on December 1st, in recognition of her talent and entrepreneurial skills.

Metua recently moved from Aitutaki to Rarotonga, and sews, sells food, takes care of her children and works hard.

The award will help boost her morale as she continues her business in Rarotonga and be part of the Women & Girls with Disabilities STEP project.



Metua Davey at her home in Aitutaki.

Mitiaro participants grateful for training

Participants of Mitiaro are grateful to have gone through the CRPD training.

It was an enlightening two day session for the participants as it was interpreted in Cook Islands Maori for their easy understanding.

One of the sessions that brought alot of discussions was the barriers that still existed on the island, particularly the stigma towards persons with disabilities on the island and how to address it by providing an enabling environment for them.

The three day session ended with participants developing an Action Plan for the island that will help guide their collaborative efforts on the island.

On the last day, the team from the Disability Division also visited the Mitiaro School and held sessions with the school children.

It was an opportunity for the children to learn about the CRPD, particularly Article 7 on children with disabilities and Article 24 on Education.

The sessions was conducted in Cook Islands Maori as preferred by the students themselves.

“This is a good session for the students as we’re mandated to equally treat students with disabilities”, said the Mitiaro School Principal.

The session at the school was conducted by Director Disability Issues, Mrs. Nooroa Numanga.



Participants of the CRPD training in Mitiaro with Disability Director, Nooroa Numanga.



Children at Mitiaro school.

The “Meitaki” Attitude Awards - first for the Cook Islands

The Meitaki Attitude Awards is a collaboration between the Ministry of Education—Inclusive Education, the Ministry of Internal Affairs—Disability Division and the Cook Islands National Disability Council to celebrate the achievements and successes of persons with disabilities in the Cook Islands.

Led by the Ministry of Education, this was the first time that such recognition has been held for in the Cook Islands, which included a series of nominations from the community including the Pa Enuu.

There were a total of seven Awards given out on the 1st of December this year.

- They were;
- Youth Award - Oraanga Mapu Award (**Isaac Vaipapa**)
- Artistic Achievement - Te Rima Toa Award (**Helen Tomokino**)
- Making a Difference Award - Kia Ka to Rama Award (**Mataiti Mataiti**)
- Courage in Sport - Tūātoa Award (**Maara Tuare**)
- Service to the Community Award - Te Matakeinanga Award (**Matamaru Ngamata**)
- Entrepreneurial Award - Te Ata Marama Award (**Metua Davey**)
- Te Koanga Award
- CITC – Supermarket. (**Accepted by Kai Lewis**)
- Spirit of Meitaki Attitude - Tumanava Award (the most prominent award) **Mama Tuki Wright**



A big Meitaki Maata to all the valuable sponsors to this annual event.

Northern group Islands trained

The Northern group Islands of Rakahanga, Phenryn, Pukapuka/Nassau & Manihiki were trained during the 50th Celebrations this July.

Whilst everyone, was geared towards the competition, it was an opportunity to provide an awareness training about the CRPD.

Hence, after the Celebrations, the Disability Division took advantage of this opportunity and provided training for these four islands.

It was an enlightening experience for most of them, and since the sessions were conducted in Cook Islands Maori, it provided an easier platform to discuss issues relating to persons with disabilities on their respective islands.

The participants were able to create Action Plans for their respective Islands, as they identify solutions to environmental and attitudinal barriers towards persons with disabilities.

The sessions was well received by the Island Councils of the respective islands.



Phenryn participants outside their Tongareva Hostel after the CRPD training.



Participants of Manihiki Island after their CRPD training at the University of the South Pacific.



Participants of Pukapuka & Nassau at their Island Hostel.



At the Rakahanga Hostel with participants of the CRPD awareness training.

Inclusive Education

The Ministry of Education provides disability advice, expertise and support for students, families and teaching staff to promote an inclusive society. The Ministry follows an ecological approach to disability, focusing on the relationship between the person and environment. Ability is favoured over diagnosis and disability is seen as a human experience we all encounter. (source: www.education.gov.ck)



Priceless smiles of another end to a hardworking year.



Playtime at the Punanga Nui Park on December 3rd during the International Day for Persons with Disabilities.

Inclusive Education Snapshots



A clip of the short film “Vaine Agaanga Toa” which was produced by members of the Creative Centre Rarotonga for the UN Enable Film Festival this year.



Disability Champion Mataiti Mataiti with George George after receiving his Courage Award at the Meitaki Awards this year.

International Day for Persons with Disabilities

The International Day for Persons with Disabilities was celebrated on December 3rd this year with the theme “Inclusion matters—Access & empowerment of people of all abilities”

For the Cook Islands, there was pre- December 3rd event that took place, the Meitaki Attitude Awards, celebrating the successes of Persons with Disabilities.

The event took place at the Sinai Hall in Avarua on the 1st of December, 2015 (*full story on page 3*).

On the 3rd of December, the Inclusive Education children had a playtime at the Punanga Nui Market, whilst the Women & Girls with Disabilities and the students of Creative Centre spent their day Picnicking at the Banana Court Grounds.

Everyone had a relaxing & fun day during the Celebrations & recognition of efforts displayed through out the year in the different disability sectors.



Vaine Agaanga Toa selling their products at the Park during the International Disability Day.



The Women & Girls with disabilities & members of the Creative Centre at the park during the International Disability Day.



The partnership team behind the Meitaki Awards (Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs & the Cook Islands National Disability Council).

Photo Credit; Ms. Sarah McCawe



Disability Issues Director, Nooroa Numanga & Dawn Hosking celebrating International Disability Day at the Park.

Pacific Disability Rights Framework

The regional delegation from the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat & the Pacific Disability Forum visited the Cook Islands in October for the Pacific Disability Rights Framework Consultation.

The Consultation was facilitated by the Disability Coordination Officer of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS), Mr. Laisiasa Merumeru.

There were four priorities, which the Disability stakeholders here in the Cook Islands were able to discuss, presented on, and provided feedback to the delegation.

The background of the framework goes back to the 2014 Pacific Islands Forum, where Leaders endorsed the *Framework for Pacific Regionalism*, which sets the parameters for regional co-operation and approaches, and contains the key value - *support for full inclusivity, equity and equality for all people of the Pacific* alongside the objective for *Economic growth that is inclusive and equitable*.

The promotion of equal rights for people with disability has featured prominently in Forum Leaders' annual communiqués.

The Framework for Pacific Regionalism recognises the importance of regional processes complementing national processes.

Disability has proven to be an issue that can be effectively addressed at the Pacific regional level and despite considerable differences between and among different Forum Island Countries and the vast geographical distances between them, there is much in common in regard to the situation of persons with disabilities.

This Consultation was held at the University of the South Pacific, Cook Islands Campus.



L-R; Mrs Macanawai, Mr. Setareki Macanawai (CEO PDF), Hon. Minister Albert Nicholas, Mr. Laisiasa Merumeru (PIFS), Bredina Drollet (Secretary, Intaff), Nooroa Numanga (Director Disability Issues, Intaff)

Disability Awareness in Mauke



Participants of the training deep in thoughts & discussions before their group presentations.



The Disability community of Mauke went through a week of training on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



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This Newsletter is part of the Disability Inclusive Development (DID) Project, which is a 2 year funded project by the government of Australia to support the Cook Islands Government's development of strategies and programs to fulfil its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and more effectively empower persons with disabilities to fulfil their potential, prosper and participate in the social, economic, political and cultural life of the community.

The DID project also promotes the partnerships & collaboration of all disability stakeholders (Government, Non- government & Disabled Persons Organisations) in the Cook Islands.



Disability Community farewells Pat Farr

The Cook Islands Disability Community farewelled former Coordinator of the Cook Islands National Disability Council, Ms. Pat Farr.

Farr has been around in the Cook Islands for more than five years and was instrumental in the Advocacy work of the Council.

She worked closely with the Disability Centres of the Pa Enea and helped set up the initial phase of Centres in Mauke, Mitiaro, Atiu, Mangaia, Aitutaki & Pukapuka during her term at the Council.

The Disability Division, together with the Social Welfare Division & the Social Impact Fund is grateful for the work of Ms. Farr.

Ms. Farr is expected to return home to Scotland to her family & loved ones.

Mama Tuki, President of the Women & Girls with Disabilities Organisation thanked Farr for all her hard work & investment towards the development of women & girls with disabilities in the Cook Islands.

Farr has lived on the island with her son, who is also involved with counselling work of young offenders at the local prison.

The Disability community of the Cook Islands wished Pat Farr well in her journey home and hope to maintain the good work that was established during her term at the Council.

A big Meitaki Ranuini to Pat Farr's family back in Scotland for sharing their mother & grandmother with the Disability Community here in the Cook Islands.

Ka kite Pat!!!



Pat Farr, former Coordinator of the Cook Islands National Disability Council making her farewell speech in October this year.

The Disability Division wishes you a blessed Christmas & a productive 2016!