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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC
PACIFIC DISABILITY FORUM

Expert Group Meeting on Disability in the Pacific:
Strengthening Implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework

28 to 30 March 2007
Nadi, Fiji

REPORT

**I. MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE HIGH-LEVEL
INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING ON THE MID-POINT REVIEW OF THE ASIAN
AND PACIFIC DECADE OF DISABLED PERSONS OR BROUGHT TO ITS
ATTENTION**

1. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, at its fifty-eighth session, adopted resolution 58/4 of 22 May 2002 on promoting an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for people with disabilities in the Asian and Pacific region in the twenty-first century, and extended the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons to cover the period 2003-2012. The High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons, 1993-2002, held at Otsu City, Japan in October 2002 subsequently adopted the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier Free and Rights-Based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific (BMF), with its targeted priority areas and strategies, as the framework to promote an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities in the region.¹ The Pacific Islands Forum endorsed the BMF in August 2003.

¹ The priority areas are (1) self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and related family and parent associations, (2) women with disabilities, (3) early detection, early intervention and education, (4) training and employment, including self-employment, (5) access to built environments and public transport, (6) access to information and communications, including information, communication and assistive technologies and (7) poverty alleviation through capacity-building, social security and sustainable livelihood programmes. Its four strategic areas are (1) national plan of action on disability, (2) promotion of a rights-based approach to disability issues, (3) disability statistics/common definition of disabilities for planning and (4) strengthened community-based approaches to the prevention of causes of disability, rehabilitation and empowerment of persons with disabilities.

2. The Commission, through its resolution 59/3 of 4 September 2003, on the regional implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier Free and Rights-Based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific during the Decade of Disabled Persons, 2003-2012, requested its members to support the implementation of the Framework at the national-level, and United Nations bodies and agencies, multilateral financial institutions and civil society organizations to strengthen their support for the development of national capacities for its implementation. Its resolution 61/8 of 18 May 2005, on the mid-point review of the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific, requested the Executive Secretary to provide technical support for the continued monitoring of its implementation and to hold a high-level intergovernmental meeting on the mid-point review of the Decade.

A. Introduction

3. The Expert Group Meeting on Disability in the Pacific: Strengthening Implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific Disability Forum in partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, reviewed the implementation of the BMF in the Pacific during the period 2003-2007, consolidated recommendations by experts on ways to strengthen its implementation and provided an input from the Pacific to the drafting process of the BMF+5. The outcome of the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-point Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons to be held in Bangkok from 19 to 21 September 2007, should, in turn, be the regional framework to guide continued implementation of the BMF to 2012 and to ensure that countries in Asia and the Pacific are able to fulfil the Articles of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol, adopted by the General Assembly on 13 December 2006.

B. Challenges to attaining the goals of the Biwako Millennium Framework in the Pacific.

4. The Biwako Millennium Framework ensures that countries, in their progress towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, address the needs of persons with disabilities. The BMF has been recognized by countries in the Pacific as the blueprint for plans and actions to address disability at the national level. Governments have been supported by their regional

agencies and development partners in the preparation of their national disability plans based on the BMF. The Commission as well as other regional organizations have played a pivotal role in placing the BMF on national agendas. Owing to efforts by self-help organizations (SHOs), countries in the Pacific are increasingly aware of the need to address the challenges faced by persons with disabilities, especially in the context of human rights.²

5. Countries of the Pacific have established national coordinating mechanisms to enhance closer coordination among government ministries and departments at different levels, as well as between government and civil society organizations to improve effectiveness of programmes. National action plans on disability have been developed. Programmes need to be directed at the national level but implemented at community-levels. Advisory committees on health and education to facilitate development of community-based approaches, inclusive education policy and employment have been established. Women with disabilities have partnered with their respective national councils on women to raise awareness of their specific concerns. The private sector also needs to be engaged as partners, especially in the areas of vocational training and employment.

6. Ratification of international human rights instruments, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which make an explicit reference to disability, is the first step towards assuring rights of persons with disabilities. In order to collect data necessary for policy formulation, disability surveys have been completed in some countries. Policies, once formulated, need to be implemented and legislation enforced. Securing financial resources for implementation of the BMF presents a challenge. Recognising government's budgetary constraints, programmes should be mainstreamed into the overall national planning process so that funding from existing budgets is possible.

7. Countries of the Pacific have introduced a number of measures to address the needs of persons with disabilities. To provide inclusive education, specialized training for teachers, curricula, learning material and transport are essential. A sign language dictionary, community-based support for women with disabilities, and bank notes in varying sizes for each denomination

² 'Self-help organizations' as referred to in the BMF (under Priority 1 in particular) includes all organizations controlled by persons with disabilities, e.g. disabled persons organizations (DPOs) conducting systemic and individual advocacy.

have been introduced. Other countries, however, still need to place greater efforts in both policy formulation and its implementation. Parents and health professionals need to be trained so that they are able to identify disabilities since prevention, early intervention and rehabilitation are key to minimizing the impact of disabilities.

8. Implementation of the BMF may be affected by the cultural and geographic characteristics of Pacific island countries. Since some of these countries include mountainous or remote islands, provision and access to services is difficult. Cultural practices and attitudes can negatively impact on the rights and opportunities of persons with disabilities, particularly in non-urban areas. Securing financial resources for the sustained implementation of the BMF poses a particular challenge.

C. Actions to enable attainment of targets in the priority areas.

1. Self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and related family and parent associations

Actions by Governments

9. Governments should establish a national coordination committee on disability to strengthen engagement between self-help organisations (SHOs) of persons with disabilities and diverse sectors.

Actions by self-help organisations

10. Self-help organisations should engage persons with disabilities from rural, remote and urban areas in their activities.

Actions by development partners

11. International funding agencies and NGOs should play an active role with governments to implement regional and international best practices in disability inclusive development.

Actions by Governments and development partners

12. Governments, development partners, international NGOs and funding agencies should provide financial and human resources and technical assistance to support the development and the strengthening of SHOs.

2. Women with disabilities

Actions by all partners

13. Governments, NGOs, SHOs, development partners and the private sector should specifically include issues of women with disabilities in the development, monitoring and evaluation of their policies, programmes, projects and services.

14. All stakeholders should support women and girls with disabilities who do not have the capacity to make decisions for themselves in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Actions by self-help organizations

15. Self-help organizations should review their existing structure and operations taking into account the needs of women with disabilities and actively support their empowerment with a view to their full participation in decision-making processes.

16. Self-help organizations and networks of women with disabilities, in collaboration with the community-based development organizations and government at all levels, should sensitize immediate family and community members of women and girls with disabilities in remote areas on the potential negative impacts of culture on women and girls with disabilities and address their issues through community based development processes.

17. Self-help organizations should actively support women with disabilities to form self-help groups within self-help organizations and form national and regional networks as a means of support and of disseminating and sharing information and to engage in capacity building.

3. Early detection, early intervention and education

Early detection and intervention

Actions by Governments

18. Ministries of Health should establish case-management databases with a referral management system for children with disabilities from birth to 6 years.

19. Efficient coordination and communication mechanisms should be established between Ministries of Health and Education in the provision of services to young infants and children with disabilities in terms of early identification, assessment, referral to enrolment in early intervention services, pre-school and schools.

20. Governments should put increased attention on ensuring that there are sufficient trained personnel in early intervention services to provide services to all children with disabilities and their families in both urban and rural and remote outer island settings.

21. Governments should establish systematic monitoring procedures at central and local levels to ensure effective delivery of early intervention services to all infants and children with disabilities in urban, rural and remote outer island areas.

Education

22. The Ministry of Education and other agencies in the education field should duly include the learning needs of children with learning disabilities in their policies and programmes.

Actions by Governments

23. Governments should ensure that all teachers in all schools receive appropriate professional training to enable them to teach children with a diverse range of abilities and disabilities. This training should be included in the regular pre-service teacher training programme.

24. Ministries of Education should ensure that teacher training programmes include advanced training courses to prepare specialist teachers who will be deployed as support and resource teachers in regular schools, and provide support to classroom teachers and on-going in-school training.

25. Governments should ensure the access of persons with disabilities to inclusive education, and to adult education and life-long learning.

26. Ministries of Education should continue to support and strengthen full implementation of the Forum Basic Education Action Plan through on-going collaboration with the Pacific Regional Initiative on the Delivery of Basic Education (PRIDE) in order to achieve:

- (a) Access to education for children with disabilities with a target of 75 per cent of children with disabilities able to complete a full course of primary education by 2010.
- (b) The inclusion of children with disabilities in national legislation, education policy, strategies and plans.
- (c) Effective regional training and curriculum development for the training of Special Needs teachers
- (d) Donor support towards the development and implementation of a regional programme to develop capacity to provide inclusive education for children with disabilities in Pacific island countries, and the sharing of regional expertise and examples of good practice.

4. Training and employment, including self-employment

Actions by Governments

27. Governments, with support from NGOs, SHOs and other stakeholders, should establish partnerships with private sector employers and trade unions in the development of hiring, retention and advancement incentives, promotion of positive awareness and operation of joint training and employment programmes, to increase employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

28. Governments, in collaboration with employers' organizations, workers' organizations, organizations of and for persons with disabilities and other social partners should review current

policies, practices and outcomes related to the vocational training of persons with disabilities. Gaps and needs should be identified and a plan developed to meet these needs in the light of workplace changes.

29. Governments, development partners and NGOs should provide resources to enhance the participation of youth with disabilities in appropriate education, training and employment.

30. Governments should safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work, including for those who acquire a disability during the course of employment.

5. Access to built environments and public transport

31. All funded projects for public facilities and transport systems in rural and urban areas should meet universal design concepts.

Actions by Governments in collaboration with its partners

32. Governments in collaboration with national disability coordination mechanisms should monitor implementation of universal design concepts.

33. Governments in collaboration with organizations which specialise in disaster management, should incorporate universal design concepts in their policies, plans and operations. This includes accessible emergency exits.

34. Governments, in collaboration with SHOs and international agencies, should actively raise awareness on universal design among all private and public entities.

35. Governments, in collaboration with SHOs and international agencies, should establish and maintain enforcement and incentive mechanisms to ensure universal design concepts are incorporated into public facilities and transport.

36. Governments should provide tax incentives for transport owners to deliver transport services to persons with disabilities.

6. Access to information and communications, including information, communication and assistive technologies

Actions by Governments

37. Governments should ensure all information is provided in plain language.
38. Governments should assess access to information by persons using sign, Braille, pictorial formats and augmentative communication systems with a view to providing training and assistive technology to strengthen provision of alternative forms of information access.
39. Governments should make all information on its services and programmes accessible for people with disabilities.
40. Governments should ensure that the Pacific digital strategy takes account of disability dimensions and draws on the policies of the Round Table on Accessibility for People with Print Disabilities' and the Digital Accessible Information System (DAISY) Consortium and other relevant ICT bodies in the region.
41. Postal agencies should adhere to the existing international standard on postal concessions for material for people with print disabilities.

Actions in partnership with development partners

42. Governments and development partners should consult with regional organisations of persons with disabilities, including the Pacific Disability Forum, on decisions and processes relating to allocation of ICT resources.
43. Self-help organizations, in collaboration with development partners and the private sector, should establish media projects that provide public information in accessible forms and formats for persons with disabilities.

7. Poverty alleviation through capacity-building, social security and sustainable livelihood programmes

44. Governments and development partners, NGOs and self-help groups should identify measurable needs of women with disabilities, and advocate for their concerns in development policy and practices at local, national and regional levels.

45. Governments, development partners and NGOs should deliver basic social services, taking in to account that there are many remote islands and rural areas of the Pacific which do not have access to basic services and where people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged, recognising that greater effort needs to be directed to reaching out to such communities.

D. Strategies

46. As a matter of the highest priority, Governments which have not yet developed a national plan of action concerning disability should develop such a plan at national and sub-national levels, in collaboration with organizations of persons with disabilities and other civil society organizations. They should further develop a five-year comprehensive national plan of action to implement the targets and strategies of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action from 2008-2012, including those which were not achieved by 2007. The national plan should have inclusive policies and programmes for integrating persons with disabilities into mainstream development plans and programmes.

47. Governments should consider signing and ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol as a matter of priority. Governments should work towards guaranteeing the rights and freedoms contained in the Convention through their national legislation, and emphasis should be given to promoting equality between men and women with disabilities, and to respect the evolving capacities of children.

48. National human rights institutions should integrate the rights of persons with disabilities into all their functions and activities.

49. Governments should be encouraged to recognize the evolving nature of the concept of disability and in particular that disability is the result of the interaction between persons with

impairments and the physical, institutional, attitudinal and information barriers in society, which hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

50. Governments should ensure the development of policies to mandate disability data collection, as well as the allocation of the requisite resources. Such policies and laws should ensure confidentiality and respect for privacy of persons with disabilities.

51. Governments, in partnership with ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre, regional agencies and SHOs, should build national capacity to regularly collect and disseminate data on disability through their population censuses and surveys.

52. Governments should develop innovative methods to obtain data on persons with disabilities who live in remote areas and who may be illiterate.

53. Governments should undertake regular assessments of the impact of policies and programmes which are intended to improve the situation of persons with disabilities to ensure the full enjoyment by them of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.

54. Governments and organizations of persons with disabilities should ensure that the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and the BMF+5 are disseminated to local level government and communities in accessible and plain language formats.

55. Governments should ensure disability inclusive perspectives in their promotion and monitoring of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

56. Governments and civil society, in collaboration with United Nations development agencies, should develop effective disability indicators for the Millennium Development Goals.

57. Governments should adopt a disability inclusive approach in all policies and development plans, programmes and initiatives.

58. Governments and agencies responsible for disaster preparedness planning and management should ensure that all plans and strategies are disability inclusive, and that this

encompasses all types of situations of risk such as rising sea level, natural disasters, pandemics and political impasse.

59. Governments, SHOs and civil society should work with regional organizations and utilize subregional plans to enhance the support of the BMF and the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

60. Governments in collaboration with SHOs and development partners should develop innovative ways and means to promote rights-based approaches at the community-level.

61. Governments in collaboration with SHOs and civil society organizations should strengthen and extend community based approaches in order to provide accessible services and to empower persons with disabilities and their families. Community-based services should reflect a human rights approach and persons with disabilities should be actively engaged in the planning, delivery and monitoring of its effectiveness.

E. Cooperation and support in pursuance of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action

62. Governments, international and regional agencies, in collaboration with other stakeholders, should encourage economic and technical sub-regional cooperation in all disability relevant developments. This should include the dissemination and exchange of good practices to support the effective implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and the BMF + 5.

63. The Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, in collaboration with the Pacific Disability Forum, ESCAP and other agencies should draft a Pacific strategy to build capacity for the implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

F. Monitoring and review

64. ESCAP in cooperation with the PIFS, PDF and other UN and regional agencies, should facilitate and enhance the evaluation of the achievements towards the goals and targets of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action at the conclusion of the Decade in 2012.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

A. Opening of the session.

65. The Expert Group Meeting on Disability in the Pacific: Strengthening Implementation of the Biwako Millennium Framework for the Pacific was held at Nadi, Fiji from 28 to 30 March 2007 by Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Pacific Disability Forum in partnership with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

66. The Head of ESCAP Pacific Operations Centre welcomed the participants to the meeting. The Chief Executive Officer of the Pacific Disability Forum opened the meeting.

B. Attendance.

67. Experts from the Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu as well as resource persons from Australia and New Zealand attended the meeting.

68. Representatives of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Pacific Regional Rights Resource Team and the New Zealand Agency for International Development attended this meeting. Observers from Australia representing people with disability also attended the meeting.

C. Election of officers.

69. The meeting elected Ms Savina Nongebatu (Solomon Islands) Chairperson, Ms Cathy Ketepa (Papua New Guinea) Vice-Chairperson and Ms Andonia Piau-Lynch (Vanuatu) Rapporteur.

D. Agenda.

70. The following agenda was adopted:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Election of officers.
3. Adoption of the agenda.
4. Disability in the Pacific: Recent developments and emerging issues.
5. Biwako Millennium Framework Plus Five.
6. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
7. Defining the priorities of the Biwako Millennium Framework.
8. Other matters.
9. Adoption of the report.
10. Closing of the session.

E. Adoption of the report.

71. The Expert Group Meeting adopted its report on 30 March 2007 as an input to the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Mid-point Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons to be held in Bangkok from 19 to 21 September 2007.