



Capacity Development for Effective and Efficient Disabled Persons Organisations in Pacific Island Countries

Stakeholder interviews at PDF Meeting in Auckland, New Zealand April 2011



1. Introduction

PDF and APIDS are undertaking a joint research project in 2011 and 2012 entitled *Capacity Development for Effective and Efficient Disabled Persons Organisations in Pacific Island Countries*. The research team attended the 2011 Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) Conference and meetings from 4th-7th April 2011, in Auckland New Zealand. During the Conference 15 people from Australia and New Zealand were interviewed by a member of the research team. The interviewees were from donor agencies (including AusAID and Aid Division of New Zealand's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade), DPOs, development partners and other interested people.

The aim of the interviews was to ascertain the opinions of these stakeholders on:

- the strengths of Pacific Island DPOs
- what would assist in developing the strengths of DPOs
- what they could contribute

All were asked five questions, which are attached. Question iii) was modified as it proved to be more effective asked as *where you think those strengths come from?*

2. Interviewees

11 interviewees were from Australia and 4 from New Zealand. 10 currently or in the past had formal or informal partnerships with any Pacific Island DPO.

3. Findings

3.1 Strengths of Pacific Island DPOs

Interviewees were positive about the strengths of Pacific Island DPOs, and identified a wide range of qualities.

i) Personal qualities of people

Most saw the personal qualities of people as a key strength. The qualities highlighted were resilience, confidence, commitment, the drive to do well, motivation and the willingness to share. As expressed by two people:

The people – as a person with a disability, once they get the feel of being helped by another person with a disability they want to pass it on – they naturally want to share their experience

Part of their cultural values is that they don't want to accumulate and hold power to themselves

ii) Adaptability and the ability to take opportunities

Five people saw adaptability and the ability to take opportunities as important.

*They have to cover distances, making do with few resources, small offices
Achieve a lot with little resources and the label of being a developing country
Because they are developing countries people see opportunities and want to make full use of them*



iii) Leadership

Six interviewees thought that leadership was critical.

*There are leaders in every country that are building future leaders
The development of leaders has been amazing over the years*

iv) Understanding of issues in their cultural context

Most interviewees identified the DPOs understanding of issues in their own cultural context as very important

They work directly at the coalface, while still having to take on big picture things such as the Biwako Millennium Framework and the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD)

People know how to achieve change in the most appropriate way in their context

They understand the cultural nuances and work within own cultural constraints

There is a good understanding of disability in their cultural context and when actions are suggested they are sensible and well considered

v) Advocacy skills

Advocacy skills were highlighted by all interviewees, and most noted the good relationships which have been formed by DPOs with a wide range of people, organisations and governments

The voice of people with disabilities is being heard whatever the agenda may be

Pacific DPOs have a lot to teach DPOs in developed countries about creative ways of advocacy that build on culture and do not cost much

They know what they want and where to lobby

As their capacity grows, DPOs acknowledge their limitations and become more strategic in their involvement

They have political weight being at the table with their own governments and donor governments

People know where most of the people that can help them are

vi) Role of PDF

Some interviewees highlighted the role of PDF in strengthening DPOs

All are able to share with each other through PDF

Organisations are able to be strengthened through the capacity building abilities of PDF

The structure of the regional organisation/coalition gives the voice more power

There is a wide spectrum of disability stakeholders; no one is excluded

PDF is listening to and supportive of members and building organisations

vii) Organisational skills

Others identified organisational skills as being important

They really want to have good governance and financial management; their reporting is impressive for a small NGO

They have made lots of progress with small amounts of funding



viii) Run by people with disabilities

One person said that the fact that DPOs are run by people with disabilities is vital.

3.2 Where do these strengths come from?

Interviewees were asked where they thought that these strengths came from and were given a number of options to prompt their thinking.

i) Cultural support

6 people thought that cultural support was important, with some clarifying statements

It varies – it is critical support in some situations

There are positives and negatives

It is inconsistent and can sometime be sheltering and inhibiting

Culture supports people to be confident enough to stand up for something

ii) Family support

4 people saw family support as important. 2 thought that it *can be difficult – there are two sides to it*

iii) Education

An individual's education was seen as an important source of strength by 4 interviewees, while one thought that it was not necessary, and another said that it was sometimes important.

iv) Training

6 people said that an important source of strength was training from other people with disabilities/DPOs and from outside facilitators/trainers

v) Funding

Interviewees were asked about the importance of funding from within their country and from overseas donors. 4 said that funding from within was important, and 7 said that development funding from overseas donors was important.

vi) Other strengths

Other strengths of DPOs identified were:

Using the CRPD as a lobbying tool

Increased awareness in communities and government means that doors are opening and the environment is becoming more enabling

One DPO assisting another to develop

Self understanding

Organisational membership of regional and international entities – PDF, DPI-AP, DPI

Peer support

Getting help in a timely way

Learning from others with same experience

Lived experience

Interaction and information that is culturally appropriate



3.3 Strategies for increasing the strengths of DPOs in the Pacific

Interviewees were asked for their opinion on what DPOs needed to become stronger.

i) Increase the range of people

The need was seen to increase the range of people involved in DPOs. One person thought that there needs to be a *mechanism for parents and family members of children to be engaged and included, otherwise children have no voice.*

Another said that it was important to *ensure access to education of the next generation of people with disabilities.*

2 interviewees said that it was important to increase the number of people with intellectual disability involved.

It is important to give a voice to people not at the table, and those at the table not speaking

DPOs should expand the range of people able to represent their own issues

ii) Development of skills

Many suggestions were made to continue the work on development of skills.

There were suggestions on the skills that needed further development and on the methods that would be best.

Amongst the skills identified for strengthening were:

- writing proposals and funding applications
- learning better English (reading, writing and speaking)
- data collection
- monitoring and evaluation
- good governance

Methods suggested were:

- More sustainable capacity building
- Longer term skilled volunteers who can work on day to day processes and systems alongside counterparts
- All training should be in country (and not disability specific) rather than taking people for short courses overseas
- Work exchanges between organisations to share expertise
- One on one mentoring
- using communication technology for video calls, distance education training

iii) Funding

Suggestions were made about funding and working with donors.



Funds are needed to get to regions (rural areas, remote areas, islands, villages) to support local self help groups; there should be recurrent funds for building and supporting leadership in local areas

National governments should be funding DPOs to be included in all aspects of life

DPOs need extra capacity – space and time – to stand up to the timelines of donors; they need to be involved in discussions and set the agenda

iv) **Strengthening advocacy**

Strengthening advocacy was also seen as important in order to continue mainstreaming of issues. The suggestions made were:

Developing a larger number of advocates

Understanding of how government works and what is required across government

Looking for opportunities for involvement in mainstream boards and groups

3.4 Organisational resources to support DPOs in the Pacific

All interviewees were asked what resources their organisation could contribute in the support of DPOs. A large range of resources were suggested, and included:

- Partnership in funding applications where an Australian/New Zealand counterpart is needed and/or in developing joint projects
- Technical assistance and sharing of skills in a wide range of organisational matters such as governance and planning
- A detailed list of contact persons, organisations and potential resources to be kept and updated regularly by PDF and APIDS
- Organisation and /or participation in work experience, mentoring and staff/volunteer exchanges
- Funding either through government programs or in meeting small one-off needs
- How to use latest IT knowledge, and affordable means for organisations to acquire it
- Building understanding and awareness within government, organisations and community in Australia
- Assistance with English skills

4. Next steps

This information will be shared with PDF members through the PDF website and the APIDS website.

Information contained in this report will be incorporated into the final report of the research, *Capacity Development for Effective and Efficient Disabled Persons Organisations in Pacific Island Countries*.

All offers of support from organisations will be kept and updated by PDF and APIDS.



Attachment One: Questions

- i. Do you currently or have you in the past had formal or informal partnerships/relationships with any DPO in the Pacific?
- ii. What do you see as the strengths of Pacific DPOs?
- iii. Do you think those strengths come from?
 - a. Cultural support
 - b. Family support
 - c. Individuals education
 - d. Training from other people with disabilities/DPOs
 - e. Training from outside experts (e.g. New Zealand, Australia)
 - f. Funding in country
 - g. Development funding from overseas donors
 - h. Other?
- iv. What suggestions do you have for increasing the strengths of DPOs in the Pacific?
- v. What resources does you/your organisation have to support DPOs in the Pacific?