**Submission – International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy.**

**SPINAL INJURY ASSOCIATION FIJI (SIA)**

The Spinal Injury Association of Fiji (SIA) improves the lives of people living with physical impairment in Fiji through services including provision of mobility equipment, employment schemes and advocating for the rights of disabled people.

The Spinal Injury Association of Fiji (SIA) was formed in 1993 by a group of people with spinal injuries who saw the need for a support organisation to assist those with spinal injuries and other conditions with limited access to proper treatment and services. The SIA has become the leading voice for the discussion and advancement of issues that benefit its hundreds of members across all of Fiji.

The organisation started out as a volunteer group with no funding, no dedicated facilities and no resources. It has since had several leadership changes and is now focussing on becoming an organisation that can partner national and international corporations, aid agencies, and government and non-government organisations to establish an efficient platform for the delivery of its services and supplies on a sustainable basis.

**SIA VISION**

The Spinal Injury Association of Fiji envisions persons with spinal injury and disability living in a barrier free society, playing a participatory role in all levels of society and contributing to national development.

**SIA MISSION**

The Mission of the Spinal Injury Association is:

To build networks with relevant authorities and agencies on the national, regional and international fora;

To identify, inform, counsel and refer persons with spinal and other disabilities and their families in the provision of services that are otherwise not available to the general membership.

​To promote awareness on the prevention of spinal injury in all areas of society, to develop and maintain relations with local, regional and international organisations using the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and national and regional frameworks relevant to improving the lives of persons with spinal injury and persons with disability as a whole.

​SIA is a non-government organization registered 1993 under the Charitable Trust Act Cap 67, Registration No. 355.

**1. MOBILITY DEVICE SERVICE PROGRAM (MDS)**

The Mobility Device Service (MDS) provides wheelchairs and other mobility devices, free of charge, to those in need. Assessments and fittings are carried out at a dedicated facility at NCPD Complex by the SIA trained team. The team also travel throughout Fiji - especially to areas hit by TC Winston, providing essential services and products.

The services and products delivered by the SIA are in demand not only by individuals but also special schools, hospitals and clinics throughout Fiji. Through our proactive approach the SIA has successfully sourced many essential items, such as multipurpose hydraulic beds, assistive devices, wheelchairs and medical supplies not readily available to its recipients.

​Fiji's disabled community makes up some of the poorest of the country's population. As such, the costs associated with accessing essential mobility aids and appliances is beyond the reach of many who really need these supports. That is why SIA provides assessment, support and equipment completely free of charge to people who genuinely need this help.

​This has only been made possible through both our strategic partners such as PhysioNet UK, Vodafone ATH Fiji Foundation, Pacific Rehab Foundation and Australia's DFAT, Fiji Program Support Facility- Treat Tech; and the dedication, commitment and sacrifice of the SIA's incredible staff and volunteers who are so committed to helping disabled and disadvantaged people throughout Fiji.

To enable SIA to carry out outreach programs throughout the 3 Divisions in Fiji in order to assess and distribute mobility devices and carry out maintenance to existing devices, collate data from clients, scoping on other needs that could be addressed by the organization and its network partners.

The objectives of the project mainly focus but not limited to:

* Assessment and fitting of appropriate assistive device to person with disabilities
* Carrying out maintenance on devices that have been distributed in the past
* Carry out changes and re sizing of equipment when and where needed
* Scoping the relevance of services provided against need per geographical locations and settings
* Collection and verification of data
* Assess the impact and changes whether positive or negative to beneficiaries as a result of the service
* Visit network on the ground and consult on the service delivery initiative
* Meet and discuss with clients on relevant issues including gathering information from clients and dissemination of information from the disability sector to clients and families.
* Forecasting for consignments

 **2. Stable Funding for SIA Staff**

Ensuring sustainable funding for the Spinal Injury Association (SIA) office staff is imperative for the organization to effectively pursue its strategic goals and engage in collaborative initiatives. While volunteer work is undoubtedly valuable, relying solely on inconsistent donor funding and in-kind donations poses a significant challenge to the stability and continuity of the SIA's operations. To address this, a sustained funding sources is essential to provide financial stability and enable the dedicated office staff to prioritize their crucial roles without the fear of abrupt funding cuts.

**Stable funding for the SIA's office staff consists of the Office Manager, Project Officer- MDS, Finance Officer, Intermediate Technician/ Driver, Basic Technician, Basic Technician (who is also a wheelchair user) would not only enhance their ability to focus on core office functions but also fortify the organization's overall capacity. With a dependable source of financial support, the SIA can invest in professional development opportunities for its staff, implement long-term projects, and establish a more collaboration with partners and stakeholders**.

 **3. Accessing the MDS service (Centralizing Hubs)**

The main challenge with the MDS service is the storage is based at 3 Brown St, Toorak.

The social protection schemes do not cover the members due to inaccessibility of public transportations so SIA provides essential services to the communities to be able to be assessed prescribed a mobility devices or maintenance of their mobility devise.

**4. Support Services – CARERS & PA**

SIA also provides support services such as carers or personal assistants for those living with disabilities however, the challenge is that carers or PA’s are not usually covered incidentals in terms of those that needs to attend workshops, or accessing services that are not accessible to them.



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