

AusAID's Disability Inclusive Development Reference Group

Sixth Meeting 1-3 August 2012

Communiqué

The sixth formal meeting of AusAID's Disability-Inclusive Development Reference Group (DRG) was held in Suva, Fiji, from 1-3 August 2012. Current members of the DRG are: Senator Monthian Buntan from Thailand, Charlotte McClain-Nhlapo, Coordinator of the Office for Disability and Inclusive Development at USAID, Setareki Macanawai, Chief Executive Officer of the Pacific Disability Forum; Ingar Duering, Head of Sector Initiative Persons with Disabilities, Social Protection Section at Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ); Rosemary Kayess, Director of Human Rights and Disability Projects at the Australian Human Rights Centre, University of New South Wales; and Deborah Rhodes on behalf of the Australian Disability and Development Consortium. Frederick Miller, Disability Coordinator of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat, Ms Konio, Doko, Government of PNG, Ms Ipul Powaseu, PNG Assembly Disabled Persons, Ms Tarita Sione, Government of Samoa and Nofovaleane Mapusua, Nuanua o le Alofa Inc, Samoa, also attended as observers.

Purpose

1. The DRG was established to provide high level insights and advice on the implementation of AusAID's *Development for All* strategy. Objectives for the sixth meeting for AusAID and its partners in the Pacific were:
 - to reinforce the opportunities and importance of disability inclusive development in the Pacific; and
 - to provide guidance on strategies for better outcomes in disability inclusive development.

Summary

2. The meeting provided an opportunity to meet with a range of stakeholders in the Pacific and to discuss issues such as the mid-term review of *Development for All*, human rights relating to people with disability, leadership in disability-inclusive development and inclusive education. The meeting also provided the opportunity to meet with and exchange ideas with key stakeholders including Government representatives from different countries, Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) in Fiji, multilateral organisations, other donors and AusAID's partners such as the University of the South Pacific and the Australia-Pacific Technical College.
3. The meeting followed regional training for AusAID's disability inclusive development focal points. This provided a useful opportunity for two-way sharing and learning between the DRG members and focal points. The DRG greatly valued hearing the experiences and insights of local DPOs. The Public Forum on Disability Rights, held at the University of the South Pacific, was particularly valuable, with strong interest from over 100 people who attended the event. Attendees were from a range of backgrounds and interest groups including students and staff from the University, members of DPOs, service providers in education and health and rehabilitation workers. The DRG also valued hearing of progress and experiences of AusAID staff at Suva Post relevant to extending the reach and inclusion of their programs.

Key Findings

The DRG

- Thanks AusAID Suva Post for hosting the meeting and congratulates the Post on its efforts to ensure that its programs are inclusive of people with disability, in consultation with their representative organisations, and for the strong leadership provided by the Minister Counsellor.
 - The DRG members are particularly impressed with the work taking place in some of the programs in close consultation with Fiji's DPOs, and the Pacific Disability Forum, such as Disaster Risk Reduction and education.
- Commends the progress towards disability inclusive development occurring in the Pacific in implementing the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat's *Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability*.
 - The DRG welcomes and congratulates the long-term commitment of the University of the South Pacific to disability inclusion given its role in educating the next generation of Pacific leaders.
- Endorses the excellent consultative process which AusAID undertook for its mid-term review of the *Development For All Strategy* and urges other areas of AusAID to learn from this process when undertaking thematic policy reviews. The DRG welcome the findings of the report which is expected to strengthen the implementation of disability-inclusive development for the remaining years of the Strategy.
 - It also notes the finding that those programs which consult with DPOs are more effective in disability-inclusion and that strengthening the capacity and leadership of these Organisations needs to remain a critical area of support going forward.
- Confirms the important role that strong political and AusAID Executive leadership has played in the successful implementation to date of the Strategy but also notes the mid-term review findings that more could be done by senior management at AusAID Posts to promote discussion and debate amongst partners and peers in country to ensure more systematic integration of disability cross all AusAID programs.
 - The DRG welcomes AusAID Suva's advocacy to all UN partners to work with the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat and the Pacific Disability Forum to ensure the perspectives and experience of people with disability are integral to their work, including through participation by UN partners in the Forum's informal disability working group. It recommends that other Posts use AusAID's convening power to bring UN partners together on this issue also.
- Notes the critical role of AusAID's focal points on disability-inclusive development and that these roles will complement efforts required to also improve the sustainable anchorage of disability inclusion within AusAID's reporting systems.
 - Recommends that AusAID formalises the focal point roles and includes these roles in AusAID's Individual Performance Programs.
- Notes that the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, a human rights treaty with a strong development dimension, is an appropriate framework for AusAID's work.
 - As a major donor in the Pacific, and as a party to the Convention, AusAID has an obligation to require that the work of its partners is in line with the Convention.
 - For disability inclusion to be effective AusAID's partnerships need to be built on equal partnership and respect for people with disability.
- Recognises that AusAID is in a unique leadership position to also promote disability inclusion in the international development agenda and that AusAID should therefore take steps to:
 - promote the inclusion of people with disability within the post 2015 MDG framework;
 - lead and contribute to global efforts to develop appropriate inclusive education indicators.