

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES SOLOMON ISLANDS

Universal Periodic Review – NGO submission

For the Review of the Solomon Islands

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Introduction

People With Disabilities Solomon Islands (PWDSI) is the National Disabled Peoples' Organization in Solomon Islands. It is a registered organization under the Charitable Act. The organization's mission is to promote and advocate the rights of persons with disabilities. PWDSI is a founding member of the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF). PWDSI has also established Self-Help Groups in six provinces; youth committee is also active in the awareness raising and advocacy work. PWDSI also reported in 2011.

Development since Universal Periodic Report 2011

In 2011, the Solomon Islands Government received a total of 23 specific recommendations on disability and human rights.

PWDSI would like to acknowledge the effort the Solomon Islands Government has in its obligations to persons with disabilities in the country. Noting the Government signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in September 2008; its optional protocol in September 2009.

The National Coalition for Rural Advancement (NCRA) Government has reviewed the Solomon Islands National Disability Policy 2005-2010¹. This Policy is now known as the Solomon Islands National Policy on Disability Inclusive Development Policy². The Government is currently developing an Inclusive Education Policy which is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The Government has also presented its initial, second and third report to the CEDAW Committee in 2014. The Family Protection Act was passed by Parliament in 2014.

The Democratic Coalition for Change Government (DCCG) came into power in December 2014. In its policy statement, the Vision of the DCCG is empowering all Solomon islanders to attain a meaningful quality of life through social reforms. In this DCCG policy statement guiding principle 'G', specifically focusses on respecting the human dignity and protecting the disabled and upholding the principles of equality, social justice and equity³. Principle 'L', encourages gender balance and gender mainstreaming especially in education, employment including people with special needs.⁴

ISSUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

¹ Solomon Islands Government, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands National Disability Policy 2010

² Solomon Islands Government, Ministry of Health and Medical Services, Solomon Islands National Disability Inclusive Development Policy, review done between late 2013 to mid-2014

³ Democratic Coalition for Change Policy Statement, 2014

⁴ Democratic Coalition for Change Policy Statement, 2014

Issue 1: Non-Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Of the twenty three accepted recommendations on persons with disability, which was given by seven countries called on the Solomon Islands Government to ratify the CRPD.

To date, the government has not officially given any indication or timeframe as to when it will ratify the CRPD.

Recommendation

PWDSI calls on the Solomon Islands Government to immediately ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Issue 2: Lack of Commitment to the National Disability Policy and Draft Disability Bill

National Disability Policy – It has been 18 months since the review of the National Disability policy. The Ministry of Health and Medical Services (focal government ministry for persons with disability) has yet to seek endorsement of this policy from Cabinet. This meant that there is no national endorsed direction to guide the responses to the needs and rights of persons with disabilities in Solomon Islands.

There has been no timeframe set for this policy to be endorsed.

The Ministry of Health has also failed to produce a budget and implementation plan for this policy.

Review and Endorsement of Persons With Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Bill 2006 – it has been 7 years since the last review of this bill. The Government has again failed to give an official timeframe for the review of this bill. The Secretariat of the Pacific Communities Regional Rights and Resources Team (SPC RRRT) has been waiting for an official request from the government to assist in the review of the bill since 2012.

Recommendations

PWDSI calls on the Government to endorse the Solomon Islands National Disability Inclusive Development Policy without delay, allocate resources for its implementation and set up national mechanisms and specific unit to ensure effective implementation, monitoring and coordination.

Immediately take steps to work on the draft “Persons with Disability (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Bill 2006.”

We call for disability to be a priority for the Ministry of Health and Medical Services with full budget and personnel allocations.

Issue- Gaps in mainstreaming Disability in Government Policies

The Solomon Islands Government ratified CEDAW in 2002. In 2010, the Gender Equality and Women Development Policy was endorsed thereafter. The GEWD policy recognizes that women

and men are equal partners in the development of Solomon Islands and places gender equality at the heart of economic and social progress, while giving equal value to the roles and responsibilities of Solomon Islands women and men.

This policy however fails to mention let alone address any issues facing women with disabilities in the country. The Elimination of Violence against Women was also developed; again there is no specific mention of girls and women with disabilities in the document.

The Ministry of Health and Medical Services National Health Strategic Plan 2010-2015, prioritizes and practices the medical model when dealing with persons with disabilities. The human rights based approach has not been applied effectively, affecting the way people with disabilities access opportunities.

According to a report for Unicef Pacific's 2010 Midterm report, in the Solomon Islands, only 2% children with disabilities attend primary school, 1% attend secondary school and less than 1% attend senior secondary school⁵. While PWDSI acknowledge the work of the government to address this by working on an inclusive education policy however, we are concerned that school fees or parents' monetary contributions required by school authorities will still deter children with disabilities to access education.

Recommendations

PWDSI calls on the government to mainstream disability in all its policies and programme. In its obligations to various convention and principles such as the Paris Principles, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Convention on the Right of the Child, Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

The needs and issues of women with disabilities must be mainstreamed in major gender policies and programme.

PWDSI calls for full fee free for all children with disabilities and access to quality education for all children.

ENDS

⁵ A report for Unicef Pacific's 2010 Midterm Review, Tavola & Whippy, 2010