
SPOTLIGHT: Fiji

Disability-Inclusive COVID-19 Response

Setting the Scene

Research by organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) revealed the impacts of COVID-19 on persons with disabilities, including their employment, health, education, and experiences with gender-based violence. However, government spending was inadequate and not inclusive. OPDs shared research findings and recommendations with state and civil society actors, resulting in a more disability-inclusive COVID-19 response. For example, advocating for interpreters and transcriptions for the deaf and hard of hearing during COVID-19 national announcements.



Who led the cause?

A group of OPDs, led by the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation (FDPF), lobbied the government and other community actors. Registered in 1984, FDPF is Fiji's national cross-disability umbrella organization that advocates for the full recognition of the rights and responsibilities of persons with disabilities.



"These achievements signify progress towards a more inclusive society where persons with disabilities have equal opportunities, participation, and access to essential services and decision-making processes. They pave the way for further advancements in disability rights, setting a positive precedent for future inclusive initiatives and policies."

- DRF Grantee in Fiji

Milestones 2020-2022

- 1. May 2020 Baseline Research:** Survey, online platforms, social media, and face-to-face interviews were completed, which revealed the accessibility and reach of COVID-19 information and updates.
- 2. Analysis of the 2019-2020 National Budget and COVID-19 Emergency Response Budget.**
- 3. Report published with results from baseline and budget analysis** documenting the status of disability inclusion in Fiji's COVID-19 response.
- 4. COVID-19 awareness sessions** held for persons with disabilities on preventative health information.

Why is this win so important?

“(It shows) the commitment of the government and relevant stakeholders to prioritize and protect the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities, ensuring they are not left behind during challenging times.” - DRF Grantee in Fiji

- The survey findings highlighted disparities in accessing COVID-19 information and services, underscoring the need to improve accessibility.
- The results contributed to a more inclusive, evidence-based decision-making for national and community responses to the pandemic.
- They documented the specific needs of persons with disabilities during the pandemic, particularly on education and livelihoods. The findings now offer a valuable reference point for shaping inclusive responses to future emergencies.

DRF/DRAF Contribution



In 2020, a grant from DRF/DRAF funded FDPF to conduct a survey to document and gain insights in the lived experiences of persons with disabilities during the pandemic. FDPF also received technical assistance (TA) support through the Pacific Disability Forum to develop the questionnaire for the survey. In 2022, FDPF continued to build the coalition's capacity with TA, to ensure the Public Health Amendment Act, 2020 meets the standards of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.