



AUGUST 2015

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2014-2015

The Samoa Disability Program is a four-year program (2013-2017) being implemented through a partnership between the Governments of Samoa and Australia. The Government of Samoa, through the Ministry of Finance, signed a Direct Funding Agreement (DFA) with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) on 31st October 2013. The Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSO) is the point of coordination on disability for Government. The Ministry works together with Nuanua o le Alofa (NOLA) and National Health Services (NHS) as principle partners of the program, and a wide range of ministries and non government organisations (NGOs). Together

they are responsible for implementation of various activities.

*(*NHS, with Motivation Australia, has a separate operational and reporting arrangement with DFAT for the assistive devices component of the Program (Outcome 3).*

Vision: A human-rights based, inclusive and barrier free society which advocates for and empowers people with disability.

Mission: Disability-inclusive policy and implementation across Government, Disabled People's Organisation and service provider organisations.

Focus:

Compliance of government policies and programs with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)– this area will ensure that national legislations are reviewed to better reflect the needs of persons with disabilities, and that consultations are conducted for new and revised government policies

Awareness and support for rights of persons with persons with disabilities, and their increased social inclusion – nationwide community awareness programs to be conducted; people with disabilities to be engaged fully in all aspects of inclusive policy development and planning

Increased participation by women and men with disability in livelihoods and employment – focus on multi-stakeholder inclusive vocational training programs and skills building activities.

The first four years of the Program (Phase One) will focus on orientation and introducing a range of Government wide policies, systems and processes, raising awareness at community level and long term sustainability of inclusive and disability specific services.

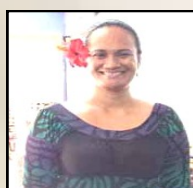
The purpose of CRPD is to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities. It covers areas such as accessibility, mobility, health, education, employment, habilitation and rehabilitation, participation in political life, and equality and non-discrimination.

- UN website

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Message from the CEO MWCSO



I am delighted to present the Samoa Disability Program's 2014-2015 Annual Newsletter. This is the SDP's inaugural edition, and provides an overview of progress made last year. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

Careful planning and administration, as well as collaborative efforts amongst many partners, were crucial components to ensure that the Program got off to a good start.

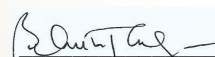
The signing of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Prime Minister in September 2014, has been complemented by vigorous implementation on the ground, and impacts of disability awareness are steadily being realised, not only in the communities but across the public and private sectors.

The Samoa Disability Program Funding Agreement 2013-2017 confirms the vision and mission of the Program, and defines priorities areas in terms of planning and programming.

The Program is keen to measure its achievements against

goals it has set, with a strong emphasis on outcomes based results. We look forward to reporting further on our progress in 2015-16.

Soifua,


Fuimapoao Beth
Onesemo Tuilaepa

'The CRPD... elaborates in detail the rights of persons with disabilities and sets out a code of implementation'

-UN website

REFLECTIONS 2014-2015

Several internal arrangements were made in the first half of the financial year, particularly in the areas of planning and management, to ensure that the Program began smoothly disrupted. With the assistance of Program Management Specialist Sarah Dyer, and Procurement Specialist Rob Boddy, the Program was able to submit a convincing and comprehensive planning framework, and register into the DFA payments schedule. The Program then concentrated on staff recruitment, which required the orchestration of efforts of the Public Service Commission, the Ministry of Finance and the Office of the AG. After 6 months following the DFA signing, the Public Service Commission granted approval for the positions of the Program; the Program became fully staffed in January 2015.

Technical manoeuvres have played a subtle yet critical role in helping to keep the Program abreast. The merging of the Task Force and the Disability Sub Sector to prevent duplication and logistical hassles (March 2015), have helped to build collaborative spirit, and prevent stalling and miscommunication. Networking was crucial to prevent the undermining of progress across the components of the program. Proposals by the Office of the Ombudsman and SENESE to become official members of the task force were



Australian Deputy High Commissioner, Ms Rosemary McKay, at the celebration of International Disability Week, 2014

facilitated and approved by Cabinet in May, and have indicated growing recognition of the role of the Task Force in national development. Lastly, the SDP's respect of the Community Sector Steering Committee supervisory role, did not go unrewarded. Acknowledgement by the CSSC of the Disability Sub sector as the first to submit progress reports and acquittals since the inception of the community sector approach, was not only a morale booster, but an important step towards better recognition for the Program.

At the end of financial year, efforts to introduce CRPD, and to mainstream disability rights and access to services into the public mentality, are felt to be progressing steadily. Minor technical challenges have emerged in some areas, but the Program notes that solutions to these areas must be implemented progressively.

Ultimately, there is a great certainty that a momentum has kicked in, and that communities are responding positively to measures that have been taken thus far. SDP continues to rely

heavily on the stability of partnerships within the disability sector.

Around 15 per cent of the world's population live with a disability. They are the world's largest minority.

- WHO World Report on Disability, 2011

PULL UP BANNERS

Inclusive development means Empowerment.



O atinae e faatauaina ai tagata e i ai manaoga faapitoa, i le faatamaoaisaina atili o o latou soifua.

  
SAMOA DISABILITY PROGRAM
Telefoni: 21032/Fax: 23639
www.mwcsd.gov.ws

Inclusive development means Awareness.



O atinae e faatauaina ai tagata e i ai manaoga faapitoa, i le siitia o le malamalama i mataupu tau manaoga faapitoa.

  
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Inclusive development means Recognition.



O atinae e faatauaina ai tagata e i ai manaoga faapitoa, i le faatauaina o o latou tomai ma agavaa.

  
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Inclusive development means Participation.



O atinae e faatauaina ai tagata e i ai manaoga faapitoa, i lo latou auai ma taufaisao i ai.

  
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Inclusive development means Accessibility.



O atinae e faatauaina ai tagata e i ai manaoga faapitoa, i le faamautuina o ala oo ma ala laulelei.

  
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HIGHLIGHTS

Samoa signs the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The Prime Minister of Samoa, Honorable Tuilaepa Lupeolai Sailele Malielegaoi, signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on behalf of government, whilst attending the 69th session of the UNGA, on 25 September 2014. The signing confirms government's intentions to become a state party to the CRPD, and is the direct result of advocacy on the part of the Disabled Persons Organization and service providers in the disability sector, to ensure an enabling environment that promotes and supports inclusive development at all levels, as one of the key principles for sustainable development.

The Program is currently working with the national Disability Task Force to finalise 2 key measures that origi-

nated from a Cabinet directive in 2012. These measures are:

Review of national legislation to assess compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (initial draft report prepared by Office of the Attorney General, completed on 15 April 2015.



The Prime Minister at the signing

Development of a Costed Plan for national implementation of Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (report prepared by Pisaina Leilua Lei Sam and Associates, completed on 24 June 2015)

These reports will be submitted to Cabinet and will

assist government leaders in determining the way forward with regards to CRPD ratification.

A compressed, booklet version of the CRPD (in both English and Samoan)

was produced as an IEC material for the community outreach programs planned for the next 6 months. A locally sensitised CRPD guide has also been prepared by NOLA.



Pisaina Leilua Lei Sam, Costed Plan consultant

'Countries are to recognize that all persons are equal before the law, to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantee equal legal protection' (CRPD Article 5)

International Disability Day, 3 December 2014

Celebration of IDD saw active involvement of the disability sector and the public in a range of activities to illuminate the significance of the IDD theme: **'Sustainable Development: The promise of technology.'** It was an important opportunity to bring home the reality of Samoa having signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the implications of this for all Samoan people. Furthermore, in light of the theme of this year's theme, the SDP was able to establish linkages with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, and plans for future joint initiatives were discussed.



Participants



Festivities



Dignitaries

Technical support for DHS Survey 2014

In 2014 the Samoa Bureau of Statistics incorporated the Washington Group on Disability Extended Question Set as part of the National Demographic Health Survey modules. The WG Disability set is universally accepted as the standard for collecting data on persons with disabilities. From July to September 2014 the Ministry participated in the working committee tasked with preparation of the DHS, providing technical assistance via questionnaire design and translation, and manpower for fieldwork. SDP funds were also used to raise public awareness.

The UNICEF Office of the Pacific Representative wrote to the Prime Minister in recognition of Samoa's signing of the CRPD, and also in becoming the first Pacific island to collect disability information at national level, using the high quality survey modules developed by UNICEF and the Washington Group. The data will be used to strengthen the disability sector's coordination, national and international reporting.

'Countries are to promote access to information by providing information intended for the general public' (CRPD Article 21)

Media Awareness

The following publicity measures were implemented:

1. Newspaper advertisements (Samoan and English) for International Disability Day 2014;

2. Arts competition to celebrate the IDD theme: Sustainable development, the promise of technology. Agencies who competed: 1) Loto Taumafai Society, 2) Aoga Fiamalamalama, 3) SENESE Inclusive Education, 4) Samoa Special Olympics, 5) Aoga Fiamalamalama, 6) PREB. The agencies portrayed their messages via the following modes: 1) Play, 2) Dance, 3) Song. Samoa Spinal Network also participated in a non-competing capacity;

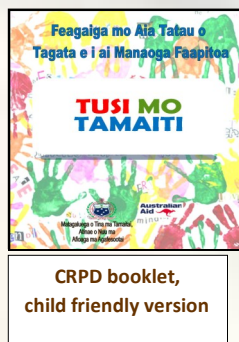
3. Essay competition for secondary / tertiary level students, to highlight the theme of IDD. This competition was advertised in the newspaper a week prior to the IDD ceremony. Entries were received from 5 students; they were awarded with prizes during the IDD opening ceremony. Prizes were funded by SDP and Samoa Stationery and Books. The winning essay, provided by Teuila Fruean of Otago University, was published the following day in the Samoa Observer;

4. Information materials (showcased at the SIDS youth exhibition and IDD ceremony): English and Samoan copies of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Samoa Disability Sector Profile and Directory; CRPD Booklet for children; CRPD: Questions and Answers Booklet

5. 4 TV spots (aired on TV 1 and TV 3). These spots were prepared to highlight various scenarios of disability inclusive development at national level.

- 1) Accessibility / Empowerment
- 2) Collaboration / Awareness
- 3) Participation / Recognition

4) Intervention and Access to Services Inclusive Education



7. 9 Pull up banners (see page 2)

The banners promoted the following themes: Disability Sector (1); Empowerment (2); Awareness (2); Participation (2); Recognition (2)

50 posters—Special Olympics Samoa champion

8. Roster of international disability commemorative events:



Health Services, to raise awareness for Spinal Cord Injury Day, 15 May. Similar measures were conducted for World Paralysis Day, 24 June.

9. TV Sign Language interpreting awareness program:

Contractual arrangements have been made between the MWCS and Samoa Broadcasting and Imafana Interpreting Services, for the airing of sign language interpretation footage for the Sunday TV news highlights. This arrangement is currently running from April to July 2015, covering a total of 21 Sunday programs. The key aims of this program are to promote and develop sign lan-

6. 3 different **billboards** for 3 different themes of inclusive development: 1) Empowerment; 2) Participation; 3) Recognition. 3 locations: opposite the Nelson Memorial Public Library, the Tooa Salamasina Hall and the Division for Internal Affairs office at Salelologa.

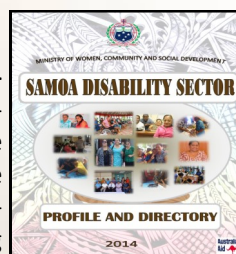
guage as one of the recognised native languages in Samoa, and to encourage other service providers to view sign language interpretation as a necessary service for persons with disabilities that should not be overlooked, for whatever reason.

10. Community Page: Samoa Observer has published a community page on its Sunday edition, from April to July (21 issues). The purpose of this page is to enhance awareness and understanding of the public on specific articles of the CRPD, and how different articles are currently being realised through available services in Samoa. For example, Articles 19 and 30 of the Convention are promoted in Samoa through the active involvement of women with disabilities in the village women's group, such as production of siapo and fine mats. It is envisaged that community-based programs such as this will develop and empower the lives of persons with disabilities in the community.

11. Awareness booths: The MWCS took part in 2 public events: NUS Career Day and Cyber Safety Pasifika program (Ministry of Police). CRPD booklets and disability information booklets were distributed.

A regional exhibition to showcase youth initiatives, was conducted as part of a SIDS Youth Pre-Conference in September 2014. NOLA had secured an awareness booth for this exhibition, which was utilised by various agencies of the disability sector, to showcase their services and products. CRPD and information materials developed via the SDP were showcased and received strong positive response particularly from school students.

Awareness raising was also conducted on programs of the SDP through various mediums: MWCS bimonthly newsletters, NOLA newsletters, interviews (Costed Plan), the Lali show, radio program, briefings with stakeholders (Program Fund).



Disability sector profile



Inclusive development
means *Participation*.

O atinae e faatauaina ai tagata
e i ai manaoga faapitoa, i lo
latou auai ma taufaisao i ai.

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Inclusive development
means *Accessibility*.

O atinae e faatauaina ai tagata
e i ai manaoga faapitoa, i le
faamautuina o ala oo ma ala laulelei.

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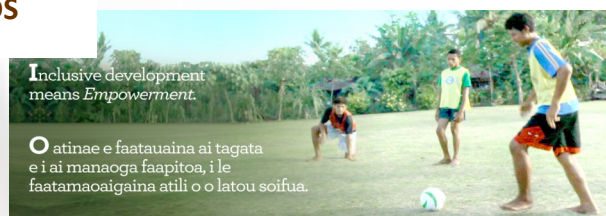
BILLBOARDS



Inclusive development
means *Recognition*.

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e i ai manaoga faapitoa, i le
faatauaina o o latou tomai ma agavaa.

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Inclusive development
means *Empowerment*.

O atinae e faatauaina ai tagata
e i ai manaoga faapitoa, i le
faatauaigaina atili o o latou soifua.

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Samoa Disability Program Fund



Public consultations

Round 1 Funding to the amount of WST 400,000 was made available through the Program for ministries, NGOs and CSOs wishing to development projects for advancement of persons

with disabilities, in line with the 4 outcomes of the program. Organisations were able to apply for funds via 2 pools: 1) Small projects: 1,000 – 5,000; and 2) Large projects: 5,000 – 20,000

A sub-committee consisting of representatives of DFAT, MWCD, NHS, NOLA and MOF was set up to consider and assess applications for funding against given criteria, and

finalise successful applications. From a total of 89 applications received, funding was approved for a total of 21 projects:

1. Office of the Electoral Commissioner
2. Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration
3. Ministry of Commerce Industry and Labor
4. Samoa Chamber of Commerce SENESE
5. Samoa Primary School
6. National University of Samoa
7. Clarence Sebastian Foundation
8. Sili Preschool
9. Samusu Primary school
10. Ululoloa Nasareta Preschool
11. Ekalesia Metotisi Vaitele uta
12. SBEC
13. Aoga Fiamalamalama

15. National Council of Churches
16. Talamua Media and Publications Ltd
17. Women in Business
18. Saleaula
19. Malaemalu Falealili
20. FIMA, Lalomauga
21. Tufutafoe Primary School

A number of initiatives have been completed; these include a DVD / CD.



Payments process session

Policy Development



Participants at the
review

A Mid Term Review of the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities, 2010-2015 was coordinated by the SDP staff as part of IDD celebrations,

looked at progress made in the implementation of the NPPD from the period of 2011 to mid 2014. It measured the completion of 5 Core Outcome Areas of the NPPD against its Objectives, Key Result Indicators and Actions. The objectives of

the review were:

To analyse performance of relevant disability sector partners in line with the NPPD

To identify strengths and weaknesses, existing and emerging trends in program implementation and priority areas; and

To provide background to programs and structures developed by the disability sector assisting in providing advice and research purposes and in

the delivery and mainstreaming of disability interests across relevant programs and forums

'Countries are to designate a focal point in the government and create a national mechanism to promote and monitor implementation' (CRPD Article 33).

Training and Awareness

A total of 9 trainings and awareness programs were conducted within the financial year:

- CRPD Training of Trainers for NOLA junior members, 2- 6 February 2015
- CRPD Training of Trainers for disability stakeholders, 30 March – 2 April; 20 – 22 April
- CRPD session for senior government officials, 23-24 April 2015
- Basic literacy and communication training for NOLA members, 12 June 2015
- Training for disability voters, 18 March 2015
- Disability statistics budgeting and training for stakeholders, August 2014
- Small business trainings for persons with disabilities, 23-27 March 2015
- Financial management training for NOLA staff, 2014
- Training on rights of persons with disabilities for school students, April – May 2015
- Coastal adaptation community project; disability awareness, 21 May 2015 (Taga and Salailua), 12 June 2015 (Leusoalii)

One of the highlights for this year was a training conducted by NOLA in partnership with the Office of the Electoral Commission, to encourage persons with disabilities

to better exercise their rights to vote. The initiative was born out of the fewer persons with disabilities registering and contributing to democracy, due to inaccessibility registration venues/ facilities and the lack of awareness about the significance of the right to register and vote. The OEC has expressed commitment to make necessary adjustments to the voting system to provide all persons with disabilities with skills and resources required for effective political participation.

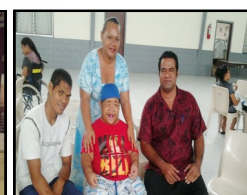
SIDS Youth Exhibition, September 2014: A regional exhibition to showcase youth initiatives, was conducted as part of a SIDS Youth Pre-Conference in September 2014. NOLA had secured an awareness booth for this exhibition, which was utilised by various agencies of the disability sector, to showcase their services and products. CRPD and information materials developed via the SDP were showcased and received strong positive response particularly from school students.

These trainings were conducted by the SDP in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, including the Pacific

Disability Forum, the International Disability Alliance, Ministry of Education Sports and Culture, Office of the Electoral Commission, Small Business Enterprise Centre and Samoa Umbrella for Non Government Organisations, Disaster Management Office and the Disaster Risk Reduction unit of the University of the South Pacific.



TOT for stakeholders



OEC training for voters



Training for Senior government officials



TOT for NOLA mem-

Disability and Sports

Inclusion, fun and information was the spirit of last year's Sports Day for People with Disabilities, 20 March 2015. Organised by NOLA in partnership with Samoa Special Olympics, the disability sector and the wider community were invited to join the festivities. Using sports as a tool for community inclusion, the program also used as an opportunity to commemorate World Down Syndrome day, which is celebrated every year on the 21st of March. Furthermore, a 4 day outreach programme was organised by NOLA and the Australian Sports commission (April 2015) to develop confidence and com-

petence of sports implementers with the skills to adapt current sports programs and activities to include people with disabilities. Develop and maintain strong relationships between NOLA as an organisation of & for persons with disabilities and national sporting federations through better awareness and understanding of inclusive organisations.

On 10 April 2015, the SDP through Honorable Minister Tolofuaivalelei Falemoe Leiatua, presented a cheque of WST10,000 to Special Olympics Samoa, as a gesture of support to-

wards its preparations for the upcoming Special Olympics World Games in July 2015.



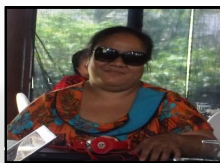
L-R: President Special Olympics Samoa, Afioga Letaa Dan Devoe; Honorable Minister of Women, Community and Social Development, Tolofuaivalelei Falemoe Leiatua; Her Excellency Ms Sue Langford, Australian High Commissioner

Meetings on disability issues

Faafetai Koria attended the Second Session of the Working Group on the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013-2022. The session was organized by ESCAP in cooperation with the Government of India through the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, and held in New Delhi, India from 2 to 3 March 2015. In his country statement, Mr Koria acknowledged that the launching of the Samoa Disability Program in partnership with Australia, has given the Samoan government the means to support the disability cause effectively through financial and technical support.

Funding was also provided for

Faatino Utumapu, NOLA Office Manager, to participate in the Samoan delegation that attended the 59th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 9 – 20 March, New York. This meeting was important because the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action will be reviewed for the first time since 1995. The Pacific Ministers for Disability have recognised women with disability as a key human rights issue, and that there is a need for strengthened reporting, for integration of gender priorities into plans and policies,



Faatino Utumapu

Accessibility Audit for Maota Fono

A new Parliament House is currently being erected through the assistance of the Australian Government. NOLA has been able to advise on the construction process to ensure full accessibility of the new Maota Fono by all.

The Convention requires countries to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers and ensure that persons with disabilities can access their environment, transportation, public facilities and services, and information and communications technologies (CRPD Article 9)

IMPACT STORIES

HELP FOR EMANUEL



Emanuel Mikaele

Emanuel Mikaele is a 9 year old boy from the village of Samusu. Emanuel attends Samusu Primary School. Since he was born Emanuel has suffered from vision impairment, making it extremely difficult and dangerous for him to get around during school.

Earlier this year, SDP provided funding assistance to help solve Emanuel's problems. By working together with Emanuel's parents and the Samusu school committee, the SDP has been able to install a handrail for the school building, and a walkway which extends to the toilets a few meters away. Emanuel can now move about freely from one classroom to another, and whenever he needs to use the restroom, he can leave the class and return without assistance.

The Deputy Principal of Samusu Primary School

said, 'Emanuel's happiness is complete now that the rail and walkway have been installed, and we know that these facilities will also cater for other similarly disadvantaged students in the future.'



Handrail

USING ABILITIES FOR GOD



Youths practicing

In May 2015, the Vaitele Methodist Church Youth Group launched a CD and DVD of spiritual songs and dances. The Youth

Group is home to 10 persons with disabilities, including well known public servants, Faaolo and Faatino Utumapu. The 2 sisters, together with 2 other members with disabilities, were responsible for preparing all music arrangements for the project, and for seeking the funds required to complete the project.

According to the parish minister, Rever-

end Opeta Ioapo, his vision had been to develop a project that would not only draw youth of Samoa to God, but would also promote the skills and talents of persons with disability

'This project will show that persons with disabilities have talents that they can contribute for the work of the Lord. The project is also designed to raise awareness of youth, that all people are equal before God, and all of us should work together, and be free from prejudice.'



Rev Opeta Ioapo



Day of the launch

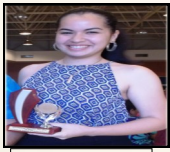


DVD and CD



Walkway near completion

SPOTLIGHT: TEUILA FRUEAN



Teuila Fruean

The SDP Spotlight section recognises people that made unique contributions to the work on advancing the status of persons with disabilities, this past year. This issue acknowledges Ms Teuila Fruean, winner of the 2014 IDD National Essay Writing Competition. Teuila's essay, which looks at the importance of assistive devices, is printed in full:

"It's not the disability that defines you; its how you deal with the challenges the disability presents you with"

This quote by Jim Abbott relates back to assistive technology in that it helps people with disabilities cope with the difficulties they face and helps make their lives more manageable. Assistive technology is defined as any object, piece of equipment, software or product system that is used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities (ATIA, 2014). There are a range of assistive technologies which can be low or high tech, for example; special purpose computers, prosthetics, wheel chairs and educational software. Assistive technology comes up with creative solutions that enable individuals with disabilities to be more self dependent, productive, and included in society and community life.

This paper will; explain more about what assistive technology is, describe what its significance is to people with disabilities, give practical examples of how assistive technology is used, elaborate on how it relates to sustainable development and conclude with an overall look on how it affects a disabled persons life.



Assistive technology "may be used to mean an assistive device, but more commonly denotes some kind of electronic or computerised device that helps a disabled person to function more easily in the world." (medicine.net, 2014). This interpretation highlights how in this technological era, assistive technology is now more generally related to an electronic device. However, for the purpose of this essay, we will be encompassing all types

of assistive technology (both non-electronic and electronic).

Currently, many people with disabilities are breaking barriers through the use of technology. Some of the benefits of assistive technology for people with disabilities include allowing; individuals to have more control over their lives, participate and contribute more actively in activities in their home, school, work places and community and greater interaction with non-disabled people (Hosmer, 1995). Assistive technology helps people with disabilities benefit from opportunities that are often taken for granted by people who do not have disabilities, for example, for people who can not walk, wheel chairs allow them to be mobile and gives them freedom they probably would not have had otherwise (Hosmer, 1995). In an interview I had conducted with a University of Otago 4th year medical student, (that has had experience in dealing with people with disabilities) he had emphasised how important he believed assistive technology was in helping people with disabilities. In his words "I have had experience with people who have had learning disabilities and have found that assistive technology is crucial in making learning and communicating more easier and enjoyable". He added that assistive technology helps maintain peoples independence as well as helping them maintain their dignity. Not only is assistive technology important for mobilisation but especially for communication.

It is important to note that all people with disabilities are different, they need specific devices that help them cope with their impairment. Therefore assistive technologies need to cover a broad range of devices/systems (in that there are many different kinds) but also be specific so they cater for each particular disability. Assistive technology encompasses a wide range of devices and systems as shown in these examples. Persons with physical disabilities that affect movement can use mobility aids, like wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, canes, prosthetic devices, and orthotic devices,

to enhance their mobility. Hearing aids can progress hearing ability in persons with hearing problems. Cognitive assistance, including computer or electrical assistive devices, can help people function after a brain injury. Computer software and hardware, such as voice recognition programs, screen readers, and screen enlargement applications, help people with mobility and sensory impairments use computer technology. In the classroom and elsewhere, assistive devices, such as automatic page-turners, book holders allow learners with disabilities to participate in educational activities. Barriers or doors in community buildings, businesses, and workplaces can be removed or modified to improve accessibility. Such modifications include ramps, automatic door openers and wider doorways. Lightweight, high-performance wheelchairs have been designed for organised sports, such as basketball, tennis, and racing. Adaptive switches make it possible for a child with limited motor skills to play with toys and games. Medication dispensers with alarms can help people remember to take their medicine on time (NICHD, 2014). These are just a few types of assistive technology. I have had first hand experience in witnessing the importance of assistive technologies to those with disabilities. My cousin has Cerebral Palsy (a condition marked by impaired muscle coordination (spastic paralysis) and/or other disabilities, typically caused by damage to the brain before or at birth). She cannot walk unaided and thus she has an electrical wheelchair so that she can move around freely in her home. She also uses an iPad with special programs (i.e. apps) that help her learn and develop as she has some learning and communication difficulties. It would be very difficult for her as well as her family to communicate and help her be more independent without these vital technologies.

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland Report, 1987). The theme 'Sustainable development: The promise of technology' refers to how in this modern age we are becoming reliant on technology to not only progress our gen-

Continued....

development in that this technology is changing and developing many peoples lives. This technology is improving the quality of life of people with disabilities and helping them to tap into potential that they otherwise would not have been able to.

Assistive technology is a crucial tool which allows individuals with disabilities to engage and perform in a variety of tasks, helps them to gain more independence and participate more within their family and community setting. People with disabilities have a disadvantage due to their particular impairment and assistive technology allows for them to live more productive, inclusive and happy lives. For sustainable development to be reached everyone needs to be considered including people with disabilities.

**Teuila hails from Matautu uta, and is currently enrolled at the University of Otago.*

THE TEAM

The Samoa Disability Program is made up of dedicated personnel, who value inclusion and creativity, and who are eager to promote rights and services for persons with disabilities:

MWCSD Team



(L-R)

- Faafetai Koria, Manager
- Meritiana Fepuleai Tanuvasa, Coordinator
- Elizabeth Ah Poe, Senior Officer
- Motiana Faimanu, Officer
- Antonina Fosi, Intern



NOLA Team

L-R:

- Faatino Utumapu, Manager
- Louisa Saupo, Information Communication Officer
- Andrew Taofi, Project Officer

The SDP has also utilized the expertise of professional consultants, to support specific aspects of program work. Sarah Dyer, Director of Australia based Pamodzi Consultants Ltd, provided essential guidance in program management, and developed the SDP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. Rob Boddy, Procurement Specialist with Melbourne based Charles Kendall and Partners Ltd, advised on financial management and procurement for the program. Ray Mines, Kylie Mines and Lauren Flaherty of Motivation Australia, have also provided operational guidance, and work with the Program through the NHS based Samoa Mobility Device Services Program.

Special acknowledgement is given to key individuals who led the design and set up of the Program: Deborah Rhodes (Team Leader); Leituala Kuiniselani Toelupe Tago Elisara (former CEO MWCSD); Peseta Noumea Simi (MOF); Heather Tannock (DFAT); Rosa Toese Mene (former Sector Coordinator MWCSD); Elena Down (CBM Nossal).

National Disability Task Force

The work of the Program is monitored by the Disability Task Force, a multi-sectoral body established via Cabinet directive in 2012. The Task Force provides a diverse range of skills and experience across the full spectrum of areas that impact upon the social and economic development of persons with disabilities. Members are: Loto Taumafai, Aoga Fiamalamalama, SENESE, PREB, National Council of Churches, MOH, MESC, MNRE, Office of the AG, MOP, MWTI, and Office of the Ombudsman (observer).

The CRPD marks a shift in thinking about disability from a social welfare concern, to a human rights issue, which acknowledges that societal barriers and prejudices are themselves disabling.
-UN website

For more information about our work, please visit our website:
www.mwcsd.gov.ws

Or contact us directly:

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"A democracy is an order of social equality and non-discrimination. Our compatriots who are disabled challenge us in a very special way to manifest in real life those values of democracy"