

DISABILITY INCLUSION AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS IN THE PACIFIC

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Introduction:

People with disability often miss out on information and education regarding relationships and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and may not be supported to make choices around this. They may experience numerous barriers and have less access to services and support for SRH. In order to better understand disability-inclusive practices in family planning organisations in the Pacific, and identify improvement opportunities, an organisational disability audit tool was collaboratively customised by Family Planning NSW (FPNSW).

Methods:

In 2017 FPNSW delivered a capacity building program on disability inclusion and SRH and rights in Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Tonga. 86 nurses, project officers, managers and volunteers working in family planning organisations in Samoa, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Cook Islands attended the training. As part of this, 57 participants completed the disability audit tool. This consisted of multiple-choice and open-ended questions about their experiences and perceptions of their organisation's disability inclusiveness.

Results:

Nearly half of respondents had never received any disability inclusion training, and 40% had never provided services to a person with a disability. Only 37% of organisations had policies and procedures relevant to disability inclusion. The majority of respondents felt that there was a need to promote positive organisational attitudes and behaviours towards disability inclusion.

Conclusion:

There is a need for information and service provision that reflects the SRH rights and needs of people with a disability in the Pacific. Increasing utilisation of services will require more inclusive attitudes and practices, and participation of people with disability in the development of programs and services will be essential in this. Professional development training that is inclusive of SRH rights would also be of value to enhance effective and non-judgmental communication to support people with disability in exercising their right to information, services and choice.

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