

GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU

NATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY AND PLAN OF ACTION 2008-2015

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE & SOCIAL WELFARE

AND

THE NATIONAL DISABILITY COMMITTEE

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This is the first major undertaking by the National Disability Committee. As Chair of the Committee I am pleased that that this undertaking has been achieved. Members played a crucial role in providing the direction of overseeing the drafting of this Policy and I thank them for their commitment to this development:

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It is through the joint cooperation of partners – in the NGO sector, donors, other Pacific Island countries, regional and international institutions – that we have achieved the development of this Policy within two years of the establishment of the National Disability Committee. This is the beginning and I look forward to your continued support in years to come.

Mr. Grégoire Nimbtk
Chair, National Disability Committee

FORWARD

It is indeed a great pleasure for me to write the foreword to the 1st National Disability Policy and Plan of Action 2007-2015.

Until very recently people with disabilities have been invisible in almost all areas and levels of the development process in our nation simply because they have largely been forgotten, discriminated against and therefore marginalized. It is time now that we re-assess our values and look beyond just the physical signs and recognize the whole person as God intended for us to do. We can do this by encompassing the whole of our population as our responsibility and not just those who can walk, who can talk and who can see.

Government recognizes that any policy it develops must be grounded in some common aspirations that will better the lives of all people in the nation. In all the development plans of the nation since 1983 Government has committed itself to improving the lives of the people of the nation; however inclusion of people with disabilities have not been clearly articulated with the result that there has been limited actions planned, and/or taken, to improve their lives.

Persons with disability have the same fundamental right to life, to respect and dignity, and have the responsibilities as any other citizen in Vanuatu. Where they cannot enjoy these rights, it remains our responsibility as Government to provide the direction to break down the many barriers in their lives so that they can participate and enjoy equally the benefits of development. We must not let the physical or attitudinal barrier stop us from recognizing people with disabilities as part of our society, some of whom are our brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, husbands, wives and also part of the human race. I urge you not let old prejudices stop us from recognizing this and work together to make sure that the strategies in this Policy are implemented.

In 1999 serious actions were taken to recognize rights of people with disabilities when Vanuatu signed the *Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of Persons with Disabilities in the Asia and Pacific Regions*, the UN ESCAP plan of action in the 1st Asian & Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities 1993-2002. In the same year the Education Master Plan included specific reference to children with disabilities with plans to establish special schools in Port Vila and Santo. Furthermore, Vanuatu's Initial, 1st and 2nd CEDAW report provided extensive coverage under General Recommendation 18 on Women with Disabilities.

Regionally Vanuatu is recognized as a leader in promoting rights of persons with disability when in August 2003 it led the Forum Heads of Government to endorse the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action Toward the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disability 2003-2012. As a result of this commitment, the Council of Ministers approved a nine-point policy directive for protecting and promoting rights of people with disabilities in April 2004. In February 2006 Council of Ministers approved the establishment of the National Disability Committee which has been responsible for developing this document.

Government's support to include persons with disability to actively participate in decisions that affect them saw Government appoint Mr John Suran as a representative of our country to attend the UN Ad Hoc Committee which drafted the Disability Convention from 2003 to 2006.

On 13 December 2006 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Disability Convention which Vanuatu signed on 17 May 2007 and thereby becoming the first Pacific Island Country to do so. Here I would like to acknowledge my predecessor, the Hon Isabelle Donald, MP for Epi, for the role she played in getting Vanuatu to the stage where we now have a Policy.

This Policy, together with the Plan of Action, incorporates many of the provisions in both the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and the Disability Convention, which is an indication of Governments commitment to advancing the status of persons with disability. Of significance is the fact that this has been done prior to Vanuatu's ratification of the Disability Convention. Armed with these two documents, it provides Government a solid framework from which to work together to build a society that is inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based for all our people and call on donor partners, regional agencies, disability organizations, NGOs, business houses, to walk with Government to ensure that the strategies identified in the Policy are achieved.

The collaborative spirit between Government and members of disability organizations attest to our commitment in this sector. In this spirit of cooperation we have no excuse to forget people with disability and their families and it now remains for us to lead by fitting our word with actions. I take this opportunity to thank all the individuals and their families in Government, NGOs and other civil society organizations who have contributed to the development of this Policy.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Vanuatu I take this opportunity to also extend our deep appreciation to the Government of New Zealand for the support they provided which has culminated in this 1st ever Disability Policy. I look forward to their continued support as well as the support from other donor partners to make a difference in the lives of persons with disability.

Honorable Ham Lini
Minister for Justice & Social Welfare

ABBREVIATIONS

BMF	Biwako Millennium Framework Toward the Asian & Pacific Decade of Persons with Disability 2003-2012
CBR	Community based rehabilitation
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DPA	Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NCD	Non-communicable Diseases
NGO	Non Government Organizations
PRISM	Pacific Regional Information System Management
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
UN	United Nations
UN ESCAP	United National Economic & Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United National Educational, Scientific & Cultural Organization
VSDP	Vanuatu Society for Disabled People
VASANOC	Vanuatu Amateur Sports and National Olympic Committee
WHO	World Health Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

Recognizing that persons with disabilities as a disadvantaged, underprivileged and vulnerable group who have largely been excluded in the development of the nation, and in fulfilling commitments made by Vanuatu under the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action Toward the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disability 2003-2012 (BMF), the Council of Ministers approved a nine-point policy directive for protecting and promoting rights of people with disabilities in April 2004 which established the framework on which this National Policy is based. These policy directives focused on the following area.

- **National Coordination and Legislation**

To establish a National Coordination Committee on disability concerns, ensure inclusion of people with disabilities in policy and decision-making at a national level, and to protect and promote rights of people with disabilities through identifying, examining and amending existing legal and policy provisions that may be discriminatory against people with disabilities.

- **Self-Help Organizations and Rehabilitation/Service Organizations**

To strengthen the capacity of self-help organizations and rehabilitative service providers and to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to health care, rehabilitation and equal opportunities to influence policies and decision-making in those organizations as well as decision making at the national level.

- **Women with Disabilities**

To recognize that women with disabilities are doubly discriminated against and to ensure that issues affecting them are incorporated into national programmes and policies.

- **Education, Training and Employment**

To ensure that all girls and boys with disabilities are given the fullest possible opportunity for education, and to provide equal opportunities for vocational training and employment for people with disabilities.

- **Access to Built Environment and Public Transport**

To ensure that barrier-free features are incorporated as a standard requirement in designs and plans for all new constructions, renovations and expansion of buildings and facilities used by members of the public, including transport, public offices and buildings, educational facilities and housing facilities, and to incorporate these provisions into existing building laws where they exist and where they do not exist, to enact new legislation.

- **Poverty Alleviation**

To reduce the increasing trend of poverty particularly in urban pockets impacting persons with disabilities and nationally through a poverty alleviation policy and programme.

- **Early Detection, Early Intervention and Education**

To initiate public education campaigns directed at early detection and the prevention of the most preventable causes of disability.

- **Access to Information and Communication**

To generate, collate and disseminate information on the situation of persons with disabilities to provide a sound basis for policy formulation and action and to increase public awareness.

- **Regional Cooperation**

To enhance the sharing of information and experience on the advancement of people with disabilities and to strengthen their effectiveness in advocacy at regional and international forums.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY & PLAN OF ACTION 2007-2015

In October 2006, with financial support from NZAID, Government embarked on developing its first National Disability Policy since independence and will use this framework as its basis to strengthening Government's commitment to improving the welfare of persons with disabilities and integrate them in national development. Through this Policy, national institutions will plan, implement, monitor and review the strategies and actions identified in the Policy and adequate financial and human resources will be allocated by line departments to support this Policy. The development of the National Disability Policy 2007 and the National Plan of Action 2007-2015 therefore is the Government of Vanuatu's action to implement its national and regional commitments to promote and protect rights of people with disability and ensure that they enjoy similar rights as other citizens.

From November to December 2006 the National Disability Committee hired a consultant to look the following actions to develop the National Disability Policy framework from which the National Plan of Action 2007-2015 is based:

- Appraising all relevant documents pertaining to the development and promotion of persons with disabilities in the country, including the Biwako Millennium Framework, previous research documents, sectoral policies and other relevant information;
- Consulting relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Education, Health, Infrastructure, Department of Women's Affairs, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management and other stakeholders, which either directly or indirectly have a role to play in promoting and developing people with disabilities in the country;
- Providing an assessment on how this Policy can be integrated into the national framework and sectoral planning and priorities;
- Establishing a baseline and current situation analysis for each components of the Policy as the basis for performance assessment;
- Making an assessment of the constraints that impact each component of the policy area;
- Developing strategies and specific targets for the implementation of each policy component.

3. COLLABORATION /CONSULTATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND NGOS

The past five years have seen a spirit of positive collaboration between Government and NGOs working in the disability sector. This close working relationship with disability advocates and service providers has ensured that Government is aware of developments in the disability sector both nationally and internationally and has created an enabling environment for Government where it is now in a position to develop Vanuatu's National Disability Policy.

Government Departments, disability organizations, NGOs, civil society organizations and individuals were invited to submit recommendations on the development of this Policy. In addition consultations were held with men, women and children with disabilities including those not belonging to the established NGOs to obtain recommendations / suggestions to ensure that a comprehensive list of issues are covered. Previous recommendations received by Government from service delivery organizations and self-help organizations of persons with disabilities that were deemed un-actioned were revived and included in the Policy NGOs.

This National Disability Policy and the National Plan of Action has greatly benefited from the participation of Government agencies, NGOs, persons with disabilities, parents and caregivers, national and regional agencies who made submissions electronically or through interviews and consultative workshops. A list of those who contributed to the Policy is contained in the Acknowledgment section above.

4. RATIONAL FOR THE NATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY

Government recognizes that any policy it develops must be grounded in some common aspirations that will better the lives of all people in the nation. In all the development plans of the nation since 1983 Government has committed itself to improving the lives of the people of the nation; however inclusion of people with disabilities have not been clearly articulated with the result that there has been limited actions planned, and/or taken, to improve their lives.

The year 1999 saw the beginnings of serious actions to recognize rights of people with disabilities when Vanuatu became a party to the First Asian & Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities. In the same year, the Education Master Plan included specific reference to children with disabilities with plans to establish special schools in Port Vila and Santo. In 2004 the Vanuatu CEDAW report provided an extensive section under General Recommendation 18 on Women with Disabilities. Since then, other actions to promote persons with disability have carried out by both Government and persons with disabilities and their organizations.

4.1 NATIONAL VISION

"An Educated, Healthy and Wealthy Vanuatu"

By 2015 Vanuatu will have achieved a significant increase in real per capita incomes, along with steady growth in levels of employment. Within the region, Vanuatu will be among the leading countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in education, health, environmental management, and other key social indicators. Public sector reforms will have raised standards of governance, levels of productivity in civil service, and will have resulted in higher standards of services and managerial accountability. Through continuing structural reform, Vanuatu will have established an effective enabling environment to sustain the significant private sector growth, which it aims to achieve in output and employment.

Priorities & Action Agenda, 2006, p. 1.

The principles guiding the National Disability Policy and the National Plan of Action is guided by the National Vision of 2006 of the Priorities & Action Agenda 2006-2015 which *'...reflects the people's expressed wishes for more employment and economic opportunities through which to earn income, for better health and education, and the provision of basic infrastructure for themselves and especially for their children, and a wish for a social stability...'* (Priorities & Action Agenda, 2006, p. 6).

The strategies identified in the National Plan of Action provide more than just actions to be implemented by line Ministries. It also:

- i) provides Government with a baseline from which a common understanding exists among the various stakeholders on the present state of disability in the country;
- ii) provides a baseline from which to monitor progress for the short-term (2007-2009) and the medium-term progress to mainstream disability (2006-2012);
- iii) provided Government the basis of its report that was presented at the UN ESCAP High-level Intergovernmental Meeting from 21-23 September 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand. This meeting provided supplementary set of strategies called the "*Biwako Plus Five: Forward Looking Strategies Towards 2012*" which have been incorporated into this Policy, and
- iv) provides Government a foundation from which to base its Initial report to the Secretary General of the United Nations on the Disability Convention.

4.2 PRINCIPLES & COMMITMENTS GUIDING THE NATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY & NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION

4.2.1 Constitution of Vanuatu

This Policy is guided by the fundamental principle of the human rights of all citizens without discrimination as contained in the Constitution of Vanuatu.

As a member of the United Nations, the Forum and international agencies, Government is committed to a number of regional and international goals. These goals also support the National Vision and underpin the direction which this Policy is taking. The international and regional commitments include the following:

4.2.2 MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

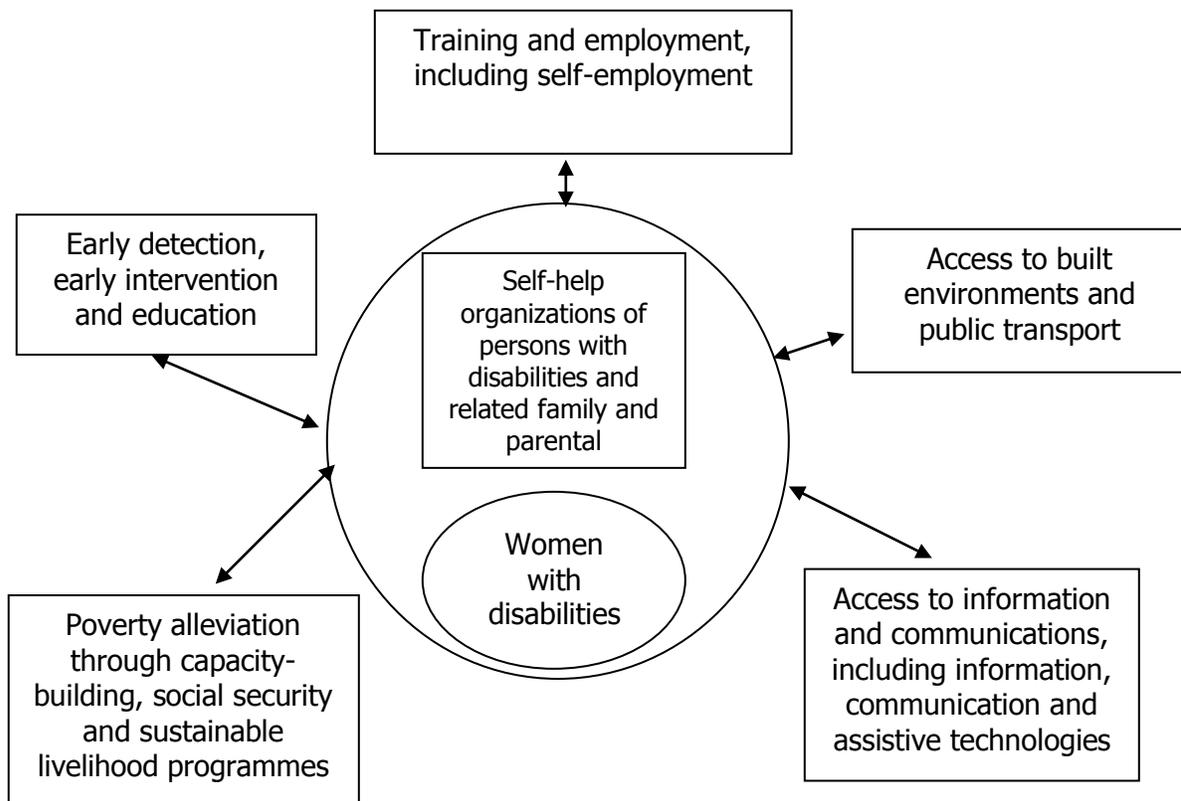
1. Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achievement of universal primary education
3. Promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women
4. Reduction of child mortality
5. Improvement in maternal health
6. Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensuring environmental sustainability, and
8. Developing Global partnership for development

Government recognizes that the Millennium Development Goals which Vanuatu committed itself to in 2000 does not specifically address people with disabilities. In attempting to address this shortcoming, this Policy bases its plan of action on the Biwako Millennium Framework which explicitly incorporates the Millennium Development Goals and their relevant targets to ensure that concerns relating to persons with disabilities become an integral part of efforts to achieve the goals. Government therefore acknowledges that the attainment of the goals of the MDG will not be met unless the goals and targets of the Biwako Millennium Framework relating to persons with disabilities are incorporated and addressed in the National Disability Policy and the Plan of Action.

4.2.3 BIWAKO MILLENNIUM FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The underlying principles and policy directions of the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action are to promote the goals of an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities in the Asia and Pacific region.

Seven Priority Areas for action by Governments were identified in the BMF:



The BMF is based on the following principle and provides policy directions to Governments to:

- i. Enact and/or enforce legislation and policies related to equal opportunities and treatment of persons with disabilities and their rights to equity in education, health, information and communications, training and employment, social services and other areas. Such legislation and policies should include persons with all types of disabilities, women and men, and people in urban and remote and rural areas. They should be rights-based and promote inclusive and multisectoral approaches.
- ii. Include disability dimensions in all new and existing laws, policies, plans, programmes and schemes.
- iii. Establish or strengthen national coordination committees on disability which will develop and coordinate the implementation and monitoring of the policies concerning disability, with effective participation from organizations of and for persons with disabilities.
- iv. Support the development of persons with disabilities and their organizations and include them in the national policy decision-making process on disability, with special focus on the development of women with disabilities and their participation in self-help organizations of persons with disabilities as well as in mainstream gender initiatives.
- v. Ensure that persons with disability be an integral part of efforts to achieve the millennium development goals, particularly in the areas of poverty alleviation, primary education, gender and youth employment.
- vi. Strengthen national capacity in data collection and analysis concerning disability statistics to support policy formulation and programme implementation.
- vii. Adopt a policy of early intervention in all multisectoral areas, including education, health and rehabilitation, and social services for children with disabilities from birth to four years.

- viii. Strengthen community-based approaches in the prevention of causes of disability, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- ix. Adopt the concept of universal and inclusive design for all citizens, which is cost-effective, in the development of infrastructure and services in the areas of, inter alia, rural and urban development, housing, transport and telecommunication.

4.2.4 PRINCIPLES DEVELOPED BY SELF-HELP ORGANIZATIONS OF PERSON WITH DISABILITIES

Government also recognizes that in order to have an educated, healthy and wealthy Vanuatu which promotes the goals of an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society, it must also seek the support from persons with disabilities and their organization to assist in identifying some guiding principles to base its Policy. It therefore recognizes that some fundamental principles have already been developed, from which Government supports. Some of these principles are:

1. Right to Life
2. Human Rights of all People
3. Equality between Men and Women
4. Non-Discrimination based on sex
5. Partnership
6. Recognition of the Value of Volunteers

4.2.5 UN DISABILITY CONVENTION

Government also recognizes the opportune moment in history where the United Nations adopted the Disability Convention on 13 December 2006 and was open for signatory from 30 March 2007. Vanuatu signed on 17 May 2007. The purpose of the Convention is "To promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity".

This is the culmination of all the higher aspirations of the international community to recognize the basic human rights of all people, including persons with disabilities. These aspirations are grounded in a human rights framework based on the Charter of the United Nation which proclaims the recognition of the inherent rights of all members of the human family as the foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind. These inalienable rights refer to and reaffirm the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights and fundamental freedoms within which needs of all people, including people with disabilities, are guaranteed full enjoyment without discrimination and that any discrimination against a person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity of the human person.

Government has been committed to supporting this Convention since 2003 by nominating a person with disability to represent Vanuatu at the UN Ad Hoc Committee. Since the adoption of the Convention by the United Nations General Assembly, Government commenced, in December 2006, the process to sign the Convention. This Policy therefore will support the ratification of the Convention and institute legislation to effect it into domestic laws. By adopting such an approach Government will be showing its commitment to promoting and protecting rights of people with disability as well as providing coherence of commitments between these international laws and declarations / commitments and the National Disability Policy.

The principles underlying the Disability Convention are:

- i. Respect of inherent dignity, individual autonomy including the freedom to make one's own choices, and independence of persons;

- ii. Non-discrimination;
- iii. Full and effective participation and inclusion in society;
- iv. Equality of Opportunity;
- v. Accessibility;
- vi. Equality between men and women;
- vii. Respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identity.

The new Convention marks, in many ways, a “paradigm shift” in attitudes and approaches towards persons with disabilities. This “paradigm shift” can be characterized in two principal ways. First, the Convention is a further step in a process that is moving away from the treatment of persons with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards to viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects” with rights who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent. Second, the content of the Convention views persons with disabilities as active members of society from whom persons without disabilities can learn and develop. In this way, the problem to be fixed is not any particular impairment or condition-of-being but rather the surrounding, often unwelcoming, environment which reduces the ability of persons with disability to participate in society.

The concept of the paradigm shift can be further appreciated when seen from the changes of perception from the medical model to the rights-based approach.

Medical Model	Charitable Approach	Social Model	Rights Based Approach
Doctors and nurses determine most aspects of lives of individual people with disabilities	People with disabilities are pitied and are seen as beneficiaries of services and goods	The problem is not in the individual, nor in his or her impairment, but in society’s response to the persons and their impairment	People with disabilities have same rights as all people. Society is obliged to ensure these rights are accorded and protected

Source: Rhodes, 2005.

This “paradigm shift” in attitudes and approaches towards persons with disabilities can be characterized in two principal ways. First, the Convention is a further step in a process that is moving away from the treatment of persons with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards to viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects” with rights who are capable of claiming those rights and making decisions for their lives based on their free and informed consent. Second, the content of the Convention views persons with disabilities as active members of society from whom persons without disabilities can learn and develop. In this way, the problem to be fixed is not any particular impairment or condition-of-being but rather the surrounding, often unwelcoming, environment which reduces the ability of persons with disability to participate in society.

While disability as such is not defined under the Convention, for the purpose of this policy, Government recognizes the need to categorize the different types of disability for the purpose of collecting data. Information on the different types of disabilities will provide Government with vital information that will support its commitment to promoting rights of persons with disabilities to access services in education, health, employment and other opportunities.

4.3 INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The development of Vanuatu's National Disability Policy is not an isolated event nor is it a process that just happened overnight. It is part of a Vanuatu commitment to a worldwide, as well as a national movement, that has seen persons with disabilities and disability organizations calling for the recognition of persons with disabilities as people with the same rights as other citizens and an integral part of any family, community and nation.

During the 1970s the United Nations turned its attention to persons with disability. A series of disability-related declarations, conventions, summits and frameworks emerged between 1970 and 2006. However, it was in 1976 that the United Nations decided to declare 1981 as the *International Year of Disabled Persons*, a action that is considered as the turning point for attention being directed to the situation of persons with disability throughout the world. 16 December 2007 will therefore mark the 31st year since the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 31/123 of 16 December 1976 proclaiming 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons, an event that constituted a landmark in the long struggle towards recognizing the rights of persons with disability and creating a better understanding of their needs and appreciation of their capabilities.

On the 3rd of December 1992 the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 37/52 to adopt the *World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons*. At the same time, the United Nations proclaimed 3 December as the International Day of Persons with Disabilities to be celebrated and also as a day to promote the understanding if disability issues and mobilize support for the dignity, rights and well-being of persons with disabilities. In its resolution 37/53 of the same date the General Assembly proclaimed the period 1983-1992 as the United National Decade of Disabled Persons. These actions promoted considerable activity in the field of disability at the international, regional and national levels. In the Asia and Pacific Region, UN ESCAP declared the 1st Asian & Pacific Decade of Persons with Disability from 1993-2002. In October 2002 UN ESCAP declared the 2nd Decade from 2003-2012 resulting in the adoption of the Bivako Millennium Framework for Action.

In December 1993 the United Nations General Assembly adopted these standard international rules for persons with disabilities as both political and moral guidelines that member states agreed to follow. This document is important as it contains 22 sets of rules concerning the responsibilities of States, disability policy guidelines and proposals for concrete action. The 22 Standard Rules are divided into three main areas and provides for a basis on which policies in the various sectors can be developed.

One of the most significant events in the 21st century is the adoption of the UN Disability Convention on 13 December 2006. This human rights Convention protecting and promoting rights of persons with disabilities now completes, at the UN level, recognition of the human rights of various segments of the world's peoples, in particular, persons with disabilities. Vanuatu ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1993 and its two Optional Protocols in December 2006. In 1995 Vanuatu ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and its Optional Protocol in December 2006. A summary of these international actions are provided below as a brief historical backdrop.

4.3.1 SUMMARY OF DISABILITY-RELATED DECLARATIONS, CONVENTIONS, SUMMITS AND FRAMEWORKS FROM THE 1970s TO 2006

- 1971 Declaration on the Rights of Mentally Retarded Persons
- 1975 Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons
- 1983 ILO Convention 159 on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons
- 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. This has specific clauses relating to children with disabilities which Vanuatu ratified in 1993.
- 1990 Recommendation 18 on "Disabled Women" adopted for the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) which Vanuatu ratified in 1995.
- 1990 UNESCO World Declaration on Education For All, Article 3(5) under the recognized that the '*learning needs of the disabled demand special attention and that steps need to be taken to provide equal access to education to every category of disabled persons as an integral part of the education system*' (UNESCO, 2000, p. 8)
- 1992 UNESCAP Declaration of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled persons (1993-2002)
- 1993 Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities
- 1994 Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education
- 1995 World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen. Persons with disabilities included only within reference to disadvantaged groups.
- 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. Recommendations on women with disabilities were included.
- 1996 Preparatory Committee for UN Conference on Human settlements. Recommended affirmative government action for persons with disabilities.
- 2000 UNESCO Dakar Framework for Action on Education For All¹
- 2000 United Nations Millennium Development Goals. No reference made to persons with disabilities
- 2001 Informal Consultative Meeting on International Norms and Standards for Persons with Disabilities:
- To further promote the rights of persons with disabilities
 - To consider proposals for a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention to Protect and Promote the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities which was subsequently endorsed by the UN General Assembly
- 2002 UNESCAP resolution to extend the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 2003-2012
- 2002 UNESCAP High-Level Intergovernmental Meeting to conclude the Asian and Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993-2002 in Japan adopt the *Biwako Millennium Framework for Action Towards an Inclusive, Barrier-free and Rights-based Society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific 2003-2012*
- 2003 Forum Heads of Government endorse the BMF, Auckland
- 2005 Forum holds first Regional Disability Meeting, Nadi
- 2006 Forum appoints first Disability Coordination Officer, Suva
- 13 Dec 2006 UN General Assembly adopts the *Comprehensive and Integral International Convention to Protect and Promote the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities*

¹ In the Appendix section of the Dakar document which highlights the Asian and Pacific Regional Framework for Action: Additional Concerns, Part VII states: "*Although many argued for basic education to cater to the needs of disabled people, the fact remains that data on the educational experiences of disabled people remain difficult to access. One way of rectifying this situation could be to include the issue disability as an indicator in all future country assessment*", p. 62 (UNESCO, 2000).

4.4 NATIONAL CONTEXT

Nationally, regionally and internationally, Government of Vanuatu has played a key role in promoting persons with disability by putting it on the regional agenda, a position which is widely recognized and applauded. As a result of this the Forum endorsed the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action and its Communiqué of 2003 contained the following statement:

50. Leaders endorsed the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action as providing a set of goals and targets that Pacific Island countries could work towards over the next ten years. They acknowledged that immediate priorities for Pacific Governments should be to address policy that would dismantle barriers and improve access and coordination for the disabled.
51. Leaders also encouraged regional and international organizations to continue coordinated research that would assist policy development and enhance awareness in Pacific communities.

Vanuatu is also the only nation in the Pacific to actively support a person with disability to attend the deliberations of the UN Ad Hoc Committee as an observer during the drafting of the Disability Convention from 2003 until it was concluded in 2006.

This following provides brief highlights of some of the national milestones which sets the foundation for Vanuatu's action to inclusion of persons with disabilities and from which the National Disability Policy can be contextualized.

4.4.1 Key Initiatives & Actions taken by Government to Support Disability

- 1986 Deputy Prime Minister Sethy Regenvanu gives building to Handikap Center (pepper corn rent), now the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People.
- 1993 Parliament ratifies the Convention on the Rights of Children. Articles 2 and 23 speak directly to non-discrimination against children with disability.
- 1994 National Planning Office develops '*Oi Pikinini oli fuja blong yumi* / Children, Our Future: National Programme of Action on Children.
- 1995 Parliament ratifies the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination Against Women. General Recommendation No. 18 speaks directly about women with disability.
- 1996 Government/NGO adopt 'Working Together for Women in Vanuatu' as the nation's response for implementing the Beijing Platform for Action for Women. Women with disability features in Critical Area of Concern # 3 under violence against women.
- 1998 Vanuatu presents report on the CRC. Children in vulnerable situation including children with disability features in the report.
- 1999 Through the Hon Clement Leo, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Vanuatu signs the *Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region* on 7 April. By signing this Proclamation, Vanuatu became a party to the adoption of the *Agenda for Action for the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons, 1993-2002*.
- 1999 Education Master Plan calls for establishment of two schools for children with disability, in Port Vila and Santo.
- 2001 Government includes VSDP representative on the 'Education for All' Committee.
- 2001 Education Minister Hon Joe Natuman accepts recommendation from the 1st Regional Leadership Training Seminar for Vanuatu to put disability on the Forum agenda.
- 2001 Ministry of Health's Policy on non-discrimination includes *disability* as one of the grounds for non-discrimination.
- 2002 Hon Joe Natuman, as Education Minister, 'flags' children with disability in Nadi in the Forum Education Ministers Meeting.

- 2002 Hon Edward Natapei, Prime Minister, 'flags' disability on the Forum agenda.
- 2002 Paul Kaun represents Government of Vanuatu at High-Level Inter-Governmental in Bangkok which recommended the extension of the 1st Asian & Pacific Decade of Disabled Persons 1993-2002.
- 2002 Fred Hosea represents Vanuatu at the High-Level Inter-Governmental Meeting in Japan which endorsed the 2nd Asian & Pacific Decade of Persons with Disability 2003-2012 and adopts the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action.
- 2001 Parliament passes Education Act which specifically provides for non discrimination on the grounds of disability and access to education by children with disability.
- 2003 Government appoints Special Needs Officer in the Ministry of Education.
- 2003 Hon Prime Minister Edward Natapei leads Forum Heads of Government to endorse BMF in Auckland.
- 2003 Hon Prime Minister through Hon Joe Natuman support John Suran, Chair of DPA, to attend UN Ad Hoc Committee on the Draft Disability Convention as an observer under PWD Australia's membership to ECOSOC as a result of a letter from PWD Australia
- 2003 Government representative Morris Kaloran attends 1st BMF Awareness Meeting in Bangkok organized by UNESCAP and APCD and prepares for the drafting of a disability policy.
- 2003 First ever TAFEA Disability Survey conducted by VSDP & Inclusion International.
- 2004 Council of Ministers approve the National Disability Policy directives/framework.
- 2004 DPA awarded the RRRT Human Rights Award for promoting the human rights of persons with disabilities in Vanuatu.
- 2004 Education Department provides first statistical breakdown of children with disabilities in the education system.
- 2004 Government includes VSDP representative on the HIV/AIDS Committee.
- 2004 Combined Initial, 2nd and 3rd Report on CEDAW provides extensive coverage of women and girls with disability as required under General Recommendation No. 18.
- 2005 Improved statistics for children with disabilities provided in the Ministry of Education's 2004 Annual Report.
- 2005 Foreign Affairs supports DPA's request to call UN ESCAP to conduct a situation analysis of people with disabilities in Vanuatu. Report by Alastair Wilkinson, UN ESCAP Social Development Advisor completed in July 2005 contains a draft implementation plan for the national policy.
- 2005 Forum member countries support regional initiatives under the Pacific Plan to 'support and strengthen the Pacific Disabilities Forum to promote and implement the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action'.
- 2005 Parliament ratifies the Land Mine Convention which was introduced by Hon Sato Kilman as Foreign Affairs Minister after lobbying by DPA since September 2003.
- 2005 Grégoire Nimbtik and DPA representative attend 1st Regional Disability Meeting organized by Forum Secretariat.
- 2005 DPA, UNESCAP and DSM run 1st National Awareness on the BMF for Senior Government Officials which recommend the establishment of the National Disability Committee.
- 2005 Parliament approves disability item and allocates VT2 million in the national budget.
- 2005 Disability portfolio moves from Prime Minister to Ministry of Justice & Social Welfare under Minister Isabelle Donald.
- 2006 Council of Ministers approve the establishment of the National Disability Committee and appoints members to the Committee. Grégoire Nimbtik becomes 1st Chair of Committee
- 2006 DPA has the Biwako Millennium Framework translated into Bislama.
- 2006 Women with disability included in National Women's Forum with 12 recommendations to include them in the Women's Affairs' next Five Year Plan.
- 2006 Drafting of the National Disability Policy commences in November and finishes in December.
- 17 May 2007 Vanuatu signs the UN Disability Convention.

5. STATEMENT ON DISABILITY

The National Disability Policy 2007 and Plan of Action 2007-2015 embodies Government's commitments to its people with disabilities to be active participants in the development of the nation. Government therefore reaffirms its commitment to uphold the Constitutional guarantee of the fundamental rights and freedoms enshrined under Article 5(1). In doing so this Policy is committed to promoting a rights-based, barrier-free and inclusive society where all people enjoy the fundamental rights and freedom enshrined in our Constitution.

After considering the various national, regional and international commitments to people with disabilities and the principles underlying the various international commitments agreed to by Vanuatu, the following have been identified as key issues to address when developing statements, strategies and actions in the National Disability Policy:

- i. Rights-based legislation, policies and programmes relating to equal opportunities and treatment of persons with disabilities without discrimination on the grounds of sex or location that promote inclusive and multi-sectoral approaches providing opportunities in education, health, training and employment, social services, information and communication and other areas must be enacted and enforced.
- ii. Strengthening of the National Disability Committee through an Act of Parliament to coordinate the implementation and monitoring of policies concerning disability with effective participation from organizations of and for persons with disabilities.
- iii. Inclusion of persons with disabilities and their organizations in the national policy decision-making process is a fundamental pre-requisite to a rights-based and equal opportunities approach.
- iv. Recognizing the already existent Gender Equity Policy, the efforts of the Department of Women's Affairs following the 2006 National Women's Summit to include women with disabilities in their action plans and programmes must be supported to enable women with disabilities to participate in mainstream women's programmes.
- v. Recognizing Government's commitment to the Millennium Development Goals, BMF and the Education For All initiatives, this Policy will ensure that persons with disability will be an integral part of the efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals particularly in the areas of primary education, poverty alleviation, gender & women, youth employment and regional and international cooperation.
- vi. Recognizing the lack of up-to-date information and statistics on disability, support will be given to strengthen national capacity to collect and analyze data, formulate policies and programmes for implementation.
- vii. Adoption of a policy of early intervention in all multisectoral areas including education, health and rehabilitation and social services for children with disabilities from birth to four years is required.
- viii. Strengthen community-based approaches in the prevention of causes of disability, rehabilitation and equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- ix. Adopt the concept of universal and inclusive designs for all citizens in the development of infrastructure and services in the areas of rural and urban development, housing, transport and telecommunication.

6. FRAMEWORK FOR THE NATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY

The Supplementary Document supporting the Policy and the National Plan of Action have identified issues that Government can address within the short-term (2007-2009), medium-term (2007-2012) and longer term period beyond 2015.

6.1 PURPOSE OF THE NATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY

The purpose of the National Disability Policy is to promote the goals of an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for persons with disabilities in Vanuatu in order to protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disability and respect for their inherent dignity.

In recognizing that discrimination is a problem that results from barriers imposed by societal attitudes and practices, legislation and policies which discriminate against or exploit persons with disabilities shall be identified, amended. Where such legislative measures do not exist, amendments to current laws and/or enactment of new legislation shall be undertaken to protect and promote the rights enshrined in the Constitution of Vanuatu.

6.2 MONITORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

The Ministry for Justice and Social Welfare shall be the Ministry responsible for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of this Policy. This responsibility shall be carried out through the National Disability Committee which shall be provided with adequate funding and resources to fulfill this obligation. Reports on the implementation of this Policy shall be presented to the Council of Ministers annually.

6.3 IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES

Line Departments shall develop policies specific to address issues within their sector in line with the National Disability Policy. Disability Focal Points shall be identified and established in each Ministry which shall be responsible for ensuring that Departmental actions are implemented.. Adequate budgetary allocation for implementation of this Policy shall be made available within Departmental budget. Consultation with disability organizations and their representatives including caregivers and children shall take place when developing programmes.

6.4 ACTIONS TO IMPLEMENT THE NATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY 2007

To ensure that the National Disability Policy is effected the strategies contained within the National Plan of Action 2007-2015 are endorsed. Actions to implement this Policy will only be as good as the mechanisms established to effect such actions, including the provision of the adequate human and financial resources, to implement the policies.

6.5 REPORTING MECHANISMS

In an effort to harmonize the reporting process the National Disability Committee shall develop a standardized procedure for reporting from line Departments. Line Ministries and Departments shall report on the progress of the implementation of this Policy annually .

6.6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

As indicated by the policy directives approved by the Council of Ministers in 2004,

“... in addressing disability issues which cuts across all sectors of Government, it is imperative that all Ministries are fully aware of the possible financial implications of this policy ...”

Each Ministry and line Departments shall ensure that adequate budget and resources are incorporated into their annual plan and budget. This will commence in 2007 to be effected in 2008.

6.7 COMPLIANCE WITH THE POLICY

The achievement of the goals identified in the Policy will be a reflection of Government’s commitment to promote and protect people with disability who are acknowledged as a segment of the population which has been missing in national development.

Compliance with the provisions in this Policy will indicate compliance with the National Vision to have an Educated, Healthy and Wealthy Vanuatu as well as other national, regional and international commitments made by Government. Without including people with disability, the National Vision of 2006 to improve the welfare of the people, as well as commitments to other national, regional and international goals will not be achieved.

6.8 COLLABORATION DISABILITY ORGANIZATIONS, NGOS AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

While the responsibility for developing internal policies to reflect the goals of the National Disability Policy rests with line Departments, Government recognizes that the responsibility to promote and protect rights of persons with disability and to promote a barrier-free and just society rests not only on Government, but all sectors of society. In developing policies and programmes, line Departments shall ensure that consultation with persons with disabilities, parents and caregivers and relevant NGOs, churches and other civil society agencies occurs when developing programmes to effect these policies.

6.9 COLLABORATION WITH DONOR PARTNERS, REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Recognizing that Government does not have limitless budget, line Ministries shall endeavour, whenever possible, to seek the support from donor partners, regional and international agencies to implement programmes.

6.10 TIMEFRAME

This Policy shall commence in 2007. Reviews of this Policy shall be undertaken in 2009, 2012 with a completion review to be undertaken in 2015.

7. NATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY & PLAN OF ACTION 2007-2015

In 2004 Council of Ministers approved a set of policy directives as a framework to develop the National Disability Policy. Following research, review and consultation among stakeholders, the following policy framework and actions are recommended as the basis for the National Disability Policy 2007 and the National Plan of Action 2007-2015.

7.1 POLICY STATEMENT ON DISABILITY

Government recognizes that persons with disability have equal rights under the laws of the Republic and shall not be discriminated against on the grounds of disability.

7.2 Vision

Government recognizes that people with disability have been discriminated against and left out in the field of development and will therefore endeavour at all cost to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disability.

7.3 Mission

To promote respect for their inherent dignity of persons with disabilities and promote the goals of an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for all Vanuatu.

7.4 DEFINITIONS

The following terms are defined for the purpose of this Policy:

'Communication' includes languages, display of text, Braille, tactile communication, large print, accessible multimedia as well as written, audio, plain-language, human-reader and augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including accessible information and communications technology.

'Discrimination on the basis of disability' means any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex, age, race, place of origin, geographic location (urban/rural), culture, language, physical, intellectual or physiological disability, industrial activity, political beliefs or activities, religious beliefs or activities, sexual preference, pregnancy, status as parent or care/family responsibilities or by personal association with anyone who has any of these characteristics which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by people with disabilities, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality with other men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial or reasonable accommodation.

'Language' includes spoken and sign languages including tactile signing.

'Persons with disabilities' include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

'Universal design' means the design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. "Universal design" does not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.

8. STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS TO EFFECT THE NATIONAL DISABILITY POLICY

To effect this Policy Statement the following strategies and actions based on the policy directives of 2004 have been developed.

8.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION AND LEGISLATION

Policy Directive To establish a National Coordinating Committee on disability concerns, ensure inclusion of people with disabilities in policy and decision-making at a national level, and to protect and promote rights of people with disabilities through identifying, examining and amending existing legal and policy provisions that may be discriminatory against people with disabilities.

8.1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION

National Disability Committee

The National Disability Committee, established by the Council of Ministers in February 2006, shall be the National Focal Point for all issues relating to disability in Vanuatu and shall be the coordinating body to monitor the overview the implementation of this Policy.

Key Strategy

Strengthen the National Disability Committee through enactment of legislation to enable it to become the National Disability Council.

Key Actions

- Enact a Disability Act which provides for the establishment of the National Disability Council with adequate funds and human resources to act as the national Focal Point for Disability;
- Establish Disability Focal Points in line Ministries with adequate financial and human resources;
- Review the composition of the members on the National Disability Committee to ensure that key departments such as Health, Education, Infrastructure and Public Utilities, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Provincial Affairs, Correctional Services, Women's Affairs, Transport and other key departments, other national institutions including the National Children's Committee, National CEDAW Committee, persons with disabilities and/or their organizations are equally represented;
- Establish a Disability Desk within the Ministry of Justice and Social Welfare to act as Secretariat to the National Disability Committee with adequate financial and human resource;
- Establish a Registration Board for disability organizations to be formally registered;
- Collect baseline data, including statistics disaggregated by sex, from all line Ministries as a basis for its monitoring role;
- Keep abreast of developments nationally, regionally and internationally.

Key Indicators

- The Disability Act is passed by Parliament by 2009.
- Focal Points on Disability are established by 2008.
- Composition of members of the National Disability Committee are reviewed and expanded by 2008.

- Disability Officer is appointed by 2008.
- Registration Board is established by the National Disability Committee by 2008 and all organizations working with and for persons with disability are registered by 2008.
- Data on disability is collected by various Government agencies and submitted to the Disability Officer and / or the National Disability by 2008.
- In collaboration with the National Statistics Office, disability questions are included in the preparatory listing of the National Survey by 2008.
- Ongoing research is carried out by the National Disability Committee and reports presented to the Council of Ministers annually commencing in 2008.

8.1.2 LEGISLATIVE / POLICY FRAMEWORK

The basic human rights of all people, including persons with disabilities, are grounded in a human rights framework based on the Charter of the United Nations which proclaims the recognition of the inherent rights of all members of the human family as the foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaims and agrees that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedom without distinction of any kind. These inalienable rights refer to and reaffirm the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of all human rights and fundamental freedoms within which needs of people with disabilities be guaranteed full enjoyment without discrimination and that any discrimination against a person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity of the human person. These fundamental principles were contained in the Constitution adopted on 29 July 1980.

The recently adopted UN Disability Convention further affirms these fundamental human rights.

Key Strategies

- i. Identify and amend existing legislation which contain discriminatory provisions and enact new legislation to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disability, to promote respect for their inherent dignity and promote the goals of an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society for all persons with disabilities in Vanuatu;
- ii. Definition of 'persons with disabilities' shall include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. This definition does not include those with temporary disability.

Key Actions

- Enact a Disability Act which definitions of 'persons with disability', 'discrimination' as per the UN Disability Convention;
- Amend Article 5(1) of the Constitution to include disability as a ground for non-discrimination;
- Amend the Education Act to incorporate 'inclusive' and 'special' education' and amend the Act to non-discrimination on the grounds of chronological age as a pre-condition to entering schools;
- Amend the building code to cater for universal access and institute directives to modify all public buildings to ensure universal access including signage;
- Sign and ratify the UN Disability Convention and effect into domestic law;
- Line Ministries to effect policies to reflect the National Disability Policy;
- Include provisions for women with disabilities in the Family Protection Bill;

- Recognize sign language as a special language;
- Enforce legislation, such as safety belts as a prevention strategy.

Key Indicators

- The Disability Act which incorporates provisions contained in the UN Disability Convention is passed by Parliament by 2009.
- Article 5(1)(k) of the Constitution is amended to include disability as a ground for non-discrimination by 2012.
- Education Act is amended to include both 'special education' and 'inclusive education' by 2009.
- Education Act is amended to allow for persons with disability and in particular slow learners to continue school above age 15 by 2009.
- Building Code is amended by 2009.
- Signage for access is provided in all public buildings by 2009.
- The UN Disability Convention is ratified by Parliament by 2008.
- Reporting from the Director General of the Ministry of Justice and Social Welfare and the National Disability Committee provide reports from line ministries on the implementation to the Council of Ministers annually commencing 2007.
- Family Protection Bill is passed by Parliament by 2008.
- Prevention of disability strategies are developed by line ministries by 2009.

8.2 SELF HELP AND REHABILITATION / SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Policy Directive To strengthen the capacity of self-help organizations and rehabilitative service providers and to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal access to health care, rehabilitation and equal opportunities to influence policies and decision-making in those organizations as well as decision making at the national level.

For the purpose of this paper, there currently exist four organizations working with, and for, persons with disabilities.

- i. **Vanuatu Society for Disabled People** is a registered NGO which has been in existence before independence. In 2001 changed from being a centre-based operation to a community-based rehabilitation organization (CBR). It is the only organization that has consistently provided services to persons with disability without the support from Government. It has not been able to provide the services as it is very under resourced.

A large part of the service delivery provided by VSDP is a service that Government should be providing and efforts must be made to support VSDP directly and/or in partnership with the Ministry of Health to provide such service. The Ministry of Health should develop a disability policy to ensure that nurses and personnel managing community health centres, dispensaries and aid posts actively seek out and support where possible, people with disabilities, their families and caregivers.

- ii. **Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association** is a registered NGO established in 1999 to advocate for rights and promote abilities of persons with disabilities. It has six affiliates located in four provinces. It is a totally voluntary organization which has been advocating for rights for people with disabilities, including various initiatives by Government in recent years.
- iii. **VANDISPORTS** is an interest group supporting men and women with disabilities who are interested in sports. It was established in 1997 and is currently housed under VASANOC.
- iv. **Vanuatu Diabetes Association** was established on 14 November 2005. It does not have a registered office but is currently housed under the Ministry of Health.

Key Strategies

- i. Establish policies with the requisite resource allocations to support the development and formation of self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and parents and caregivers with specific focus on rural dwellers;
- ii. Strengthen the inclusion of organizations of persons with disabilities in national decision-making process involving planning and programme implementation which directly and indirectly affect their lives;
- iii. Establish policies with requisite resource allocations to support community-based rehabilitation services;
- iv. Establish policies with requisite resource allocations to support sporting groups.

Key Actions

- Under the direction of the Ministry of Justice and Social Welfare plus the National Disability Committee, increase the level of consultations and representation between self-help organizations of persons with disabilities and diverse sectoral ministries as well as with civil society, private sector and donor partners. These measures include training of persons with disabilities on how to participate effectively in the various decision-making processes;

- Establish a Policy Review Panel within the National Disability Committee for the purpose of reviewing all policies and their implementation which directly or indirectly affect persons with disabilities;
- International funding agencies and NGOs to give high priority in their development policies to providing funding and technical assistance to promote and strengthen self-help organizations of persons with disabilities;
- Self-help organizations to develop programmes for capacity-building to empower their members, including youth and women with disabilities as well as their own organizations;
- Departments of Health and Education should engage with community based rehabilitative (CBR) to develop referrals to programmes and services;
- Department of Health to develop a Policy on CBR;
- In association with the Ministry of Health, support the Vanuatu Diabetes Association 'Foot Campaign';
- Link diet and health and develop a diabetes campaign in association with the Health Department, Department of Sports and VASANOC;
- Provide counselling to pre- and post-counselling for amputees.

Key Indicators

- Annual reports containing data on the level of consultations and representation of persons with disabilities within diverse sectoral ministries, NGOs, civil society, private sector are reported annually commencing 2008.
- National policies are reviewed for discriminatory provisions by 2009.
- Evidence of increase in the level of funding to the disability sector by 2012.
- Programme to build capacity of persons with disabilities are established by 2008.
- Department of Health has specific budget to support community-based rehabilitation programmes, including the development of a referral system, by 2009.
- Department of Health develop a Disability Prevention Strategy on diabetes in consultation with the Vanuatu Diabetes Association and Vanuatu Society for Disabled People by 2009.
- Disability Prevention programme utilizing health and well being is developed between the Department of Health, VANDISPORTS, VASANOC and the Vanuatu Diabetes Association.
- Specialist such as psychologists, psychiatric nurses, social workers are trained and in places by 2015.

8.3 WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

Policy Directive To recognize that women with disabilities are doubly discriminated against and to ensure that issues affecting them are incorporated into national programmes and policies.

Government recognizes that women with disabilities face double, sometimes triple discrimination because they are women and they are disabled. In many instances women with disabilities are mothers and also caregivers and as parents and caregiver, Government also recognizes that they too can be discriminated against on the basis that they have family members who have a disability.

In giving women with disabilities a high priority in the National Disability Policy, Government recognizes that all persons are equal before and under the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law.

Key Strategies

- i. Ensure that anti-discrimination measure, where appropriate, which safeguard rights or women with disabilities are in place;
- ii. National self-help organizations persons with disabilities and community based rehabilitation organizations adopt policies to promote the full participation and equal representation of women with disabilities in their activities, including in management, organizational training and advocacy programmes;
- iii. Women with disabilities to be included in the membership of national mainstream women's associations.

Key Actions

- All agencies, including Government, NGOs, self-help organizations, donors and civil society must promote and uphold at all times the rights of women with disabilities to choice and self-determination;
- Measures to uphold the rights of women with disabilities and to protect them from discrimination are implemented. In particular, measures to ensure equal access to health services, education, training and employment, and protection from sexual and other forms of abuse and violence to be implemented;
- Programmes to raise public awareness of the situation of women with disabilities to promote positive attitudes, role models and opportunities for their development are developed;
- National agencies, self-help organizations and community based rehabilitation organizations to ensure that women with disabilities are represented at the local and national levels of the organizations and constitute at least half of their delegations at meetings, workshops and seminars;
- Disseminate relevant gender-related information among women with disabilities including international documents and information on national legislation including the right of women with disability to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children, reproductive and family planning education.

Key Indicators

- Non Discrimination Act is passed by Parliament by 2009.
- Equal Opportunities Act is passed by Parliament by 2009.
- Act Against Sexual Harassment is passed by Parliament by 2009.

- leadership training for women with disabilities to raise their awareness of gender issues and to increase their capacity to participate in policy and decision-making processes at all levels of self-help organizations and in advocacy and consultative roles with government and in civil society is provided.
- Women with disabilities are included in mainstream women's organizations by 2009.
- Accessible venues, arrangements and support as well as training materials in accessible formats are providing.
- Review of the recommendations in the National Women's Policy is conducted in 2009.

8.4 EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Policy Directive: To ensure that all girls and boys with disabilities are given the fullest possible opportunity for education, and to provide equal opportunities for vocational training and employment for people with disabilities.

8.4.1 EDUCATION

Government recognizes that children with disabilities have been excluded from general education on the basis of their disability as a result of the well as from societal and environmental barriers that hinder their participation in education. The full development of their potential can be facilitated through ridding of these barriers. Government also recognizes that all children, of differing abilities, have a right to education and will pursue a policy of inclusive education commencing in kindergarten in Vanuatu.

The overall goal of inclusive education is a school where all children are participating and treated equally. It is a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion and exclusion within and from education. The objective of inclusive education is to support education for all, with special emphasis on removing barriers to participation and learning for girls and women, disadvantaged groups, children with disabilities and out-of-school children.

Government acknowledges that in some instances, special education may be considered to be the most appropriate form of education for some children with disabilities. The education of all children, including children with disabilities, in community schools assists in breaking down barriers and negative attitudes and facilitates social integration and cohesion within communities and the involvement of parents and the local community in community schools further strengthens this process.

Government further recognizes that there is a need to understand the concepts of 'special education' and 'inclusive education' and for the Department of Education to research and analyze such approached and identification of the types of disabilities in each province prior to establishing schools for children with disabilities.

Boys and girls, men and women with disabilities of all ages have a right to education. However, they suffer from a pervasive and disproportionate denial of this right. The 2007 statistics in Vanuatu shows that:

- a. In primary schools there were 3,396 children with disabilities out of 33,268 students. This represents nearly 10 percent of all children attending primary schools;
- b. In secondary schools there were 392 children with disabilities out of 5,002 students or 8 percent;
- c. In senior secondary schools there were 251 children with disabilities out of 4,804 students or 5 percent.

In 2007 a total of 348 children with disabilities did not attend school. Of these, 163 were in the kindergarten age group; 258 in the primary school level and 348 in the secondary school level.

How many children were not able to access secondary schooling due to attitudinal, structural and administrative barriers such as negative attitudes, inadequate teacher training, inappropriate educational tools, lack of qualified special needs and sign/braille teachers, lack of accessible textbooks, failure to make modifications to the school environment to make it fully accessible, school fees and many more are barriers that need to be researched and

documented. What is clear is that the exclusion of children and youths with disabilities from higher education will result in their exclusion from other opportunities of development leading to diminished access to vocational training, employment, income generation and potential to live independent lives.

The 2007 data also highlights areas that

- 601 children with disabilities are slow learners
- 205 are deaf or hard of hearing
- 180 have speech problems
- 117 are blind or partially blind
- 66 have physical disabilities

Adequate public budgetary allocation specifically for the education of children with disabilities should be provided within the education budget to support the call to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of achieving 75 percent enrolment in primary school as well as other international commitments.

Key Strategies

- Examine the strategies in inclusive education and special education with a view to developing an educational approach that will meet the needs of children with disabilities;
- Five year targets are set for the enrolment of children with disabilities in early intervention, pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary (post-school) education. Progress towards meeting these targets should be closely monitored with a view to achieving the goal of at least 75 percent of children with disabilities in school by 2012;
- Ministry of Education to include in its Special Education Policy a public awareness campaign to ensure understanding by parents, teachers and education that all children have the right to attend school and that it is the responsibility of the school to accommodate differences in learners;
- Adequate budgetary allocation specifically for the education of children with disabilities is provided within the education budget;
- Implement a progressive programme toward achieving barrier-free and accessible schools by 2012.

Key Actions

- Research of experiences and good practices in inclusive education and special education is conducted and to support the development of inclusive education initiatives;
- Special / Inclusive Education Policy is completed;
- Statistical data on age, sex, disability type, location and other information is collected and disseminated widely between and with other agencies;
- Comprehensive pre- and in-service teacher training for all teachers, with methodology and techniques for teaching children with diverse abilities, and the development of flexible curriculum, teaching and assessment strategies is conducted;
- At least five scholarships are given to students to study Special Education in PNG;
- Education and training for raising the awareness of public officials, including educational and school administrators and teachers, to promote positive attitudes to the education of children with disabilities, increase sensitivity to the rights of children with disabilities to

be educated in local schools and on practical strategies for including children and youth with disabilities in regular schools;

- Procedures for child screening, identification and placement, child-centred and individualized teaching strategies and full systems of learning and teaching support, including resource centres and specialist teachers, in rural and urban areas is provided;
- Appropriate and accessible teaching materials, equipment and devices, unencumbered by copyright restriction is available;
- Ensure flexible and adaptable curriculum which appropriate to the abilities of individual children and relevant in the local context;
- Sign language and braille training for Special Education teachers commences is instituted.

Key Indicators

- Research is completed and Policy on Special / Inclusive Education is completed by 2008.
- Statistical data on age, sex, year in school, province, type of disability is compiled by March every year and distributed widely to policy makers and others commencing April 2008.
- National Statistics Office uploads these education data on its PRISM website commencing May 2008.
- At least five trainee teachers in Special Education are provided scholarships to study in PNG by 2008.
- Department of Education and Health in consultation with services organization such as VSDP begin to put in place screening procedures to ear and eye testing by 2009.
- Vanuatu Teachers College includes sign language training as part of its curriculum by 2009.

8.4.2 TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

Government recognizes and supports the rights of persons with disability to decent work. In order to have decent work, access to education and training is necessary. As a first step to this recognition, legislative measures to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability has to be instituted. As a member of the International Labour Organization since June 2004, ILO Convention 159 must be ratified.

Government also recognizes that little data is available on how many people with disabilities are able to gain access to training which leads on to paid or self-employment.

Key Strategies

- i. By 2012, at least 30 percent of all vocational training programmes will include persons with disabilities and provide appropriate support and job placement or business development services for them;
- ii. By 2009, reliable data that measure the employment and self-employment rates of persons with disabilities exist;
- iii. Examine and / or enact anti-discriminatory legislation, where appropriate, that protects the rights of workers with disabilities to equal treatment and opportunities in the workplace and in the marketplace.

Key Actions

- International Labour Organization Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention (No. 159) is ratified and legislation enacted to effect it;
- Existing legislation that are discriminatory to person with disability in the labour market are reviewed and / or amended;
- Statistics on the number of persons with disability and disaggregated by sex, type of disability, place of employment and other information are collected;
- Training programmes include persons with disability;
- With the assistance of NGOs, ensure that persons with disabilities have the support services they require to participate in mainstream vocational training and employment and allocate the additional funds required to remove barriers to inclusion, with the full recognition that the price tag related to exclusion is higher;
- Employer incentives and strategies to move persons with disabilities into open employment is established;
- In consultation with organizations of and for persons with disabilities as well as employer's and workers' organization, institute a coordinating body and some mechanism to evaluate the success of including persons with disabilities in training, employment, self-employment and poverty alleviation programmes;
- Government as a major employer to be a model employer with regard to the hiring, retention and advancement of workers with disabilities;
- Mechanisms for the collection and dissemination of information related to good practices in all aspects of training and employment are collected.

Key Indicators

- ILO Convention 159 is ratified and enacted into domestic law by 2008.
- Review of existing legislation to remove discriminatory provisions completed by 2009.
- Statistical data on age, sex, type of employment, province, type of disability is compiled every year and distributed widely to policy makers and others commencing April 2008.
- National Statistics Office uploads these education data on its PRISM website commencing May 2008.

- Number of persons with disabilities trained is reported annually commencing 2008.
- Training of persons with disabilities is included in all training institutions by 2012.
- Policy of 0.4 percent of employees in Government as persons with disability approved by 2009.
- Annual 'Employer of the Year' awards for best practice for hiring and training of persons with disabilities are instituted by 2009.

8.5 ACCESS TO BUILT ENVIRONMENT & PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Policy Directive: To ensure that barrier-free features are incorporated as a standard requirement in designs and plans for all new constructions, renovations and expansion of buildings and facilities used by members of the public, including transport, public offices and buildings, educational facilities and housing facilities, and to incorporate these provisions into existing building laws where they exist and where they do not exist, to enact new legislation.

Government recognizes the right for persons with disabilities to participate on the same level as other citizens in all walks of life. Structural barriers, including access to public buildings and transport, are a denial of that right. Both the built environment and the public transport system are major barriers which prevent people with disabilities from actively participating in social and economic activities in the country. For some people with disabilities, all public transport in Vanuatu is currently inaccessible, particularly so for wheelchair users. There are no buses, taxis, boats, and even airplanes facilities which can accommodate a person in a wheel chair where he or she can just get in or get on and off. All wheelchair users, for example, must be lifted into these modes of transportation. Very few public buildings in Vanuatu are accessible and have yet to be audited for their accessibility.

The Building Code exists which provides for architectural designs to be accessible; however, it is not enforced. The Code should be examined and amendments made to ensure inclusion of universal / inclusive designs. While amendments to the Building Code will substantially help, it will be further enhance when an Accessibility Code is drafted. This is because normal building by-laws and codes, regulatory mechanisms, implementation framework for building and planning controls and approvals already exist and are operative at local, provincial and national government levels. The Accessibility Code will supplement those regulatory infrastructure to meet the specific needs of people with disabilities regarding the use of buildings, facilities and public areas for their convenience and safety. The formulation and enforcement of the Accessibility Code should in no way be construed to either replace or substitute the normal building and planning control regulations or mechanisms of the regulatory authorities. It should only be intended to supplement the normal building and planning control functions of a civil society for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

The Accessibility Code should contain provisions of the building code, regulations and by-laws for making new as well as renovating existing buildings, facilities, spaces and areas accessible to people with disabilities. Solutions to accessible designs in outdoor environment such as obstructions, signage, street furniture, pathways and curb ramps exists which also provides design requirements of vertical and horizontal access in both new and existing constructions for ramps, elevators, platform lifts, stairs, railings and handrails, entrances, vestibules, doors, corridors and rest rooms. Adaptation of standards such as the Australian standards is one way to move this policy forward.

The call for universal access through designing the built environment and public transport will not only benefit people with disabilities but also many other sectors within the society such as older people, pregnant women, parents with young children, people with temporary illnesses such as a broken leg or arm. The universal / inclusive design approaches provide safer environments for all by reducing the rate of accidents which prevent the full participation and reduce the economic and social output of all people. Investments in the removal and prevention of architectural and design barriers can be justified on economic grounds, particularly in areas most critical to social and economic participation such as transport, housing, education, employment, health care, government, public discourse, cultural and religious activities, leisure and recreation. Not only should these facilities be accessible but the services should be accessible in their entirety.

Government will therefore consider adopting and enforcing accessibility standards for planning of public facilities, infrastructure and transport, including those in rural areas. In 2006 Vanuatu became a recipient of the United State's Millennium Challenge Account, almost all to be spent on upgrading the infrastructures throughout the nation. While the concept of universal designs might not be in the grant, a policy to include inclusive designs particularly for existing structures can be incorporated into such existing projects and negotiated. Certainly, in future loans / grants, this Policy will ensure that all international and regional funding agencies for infrastructure development include universal designs in their loan/grant awards.

Key Strategies

- i. To develop an environment that is barrier-free and accessible for all;
- ii. To examine, amend existing legislation to ensure universal access and / or draft legislation;
- iii. Enforce accessibility standards for planning of public facilities, infrastructure and transport, including those in rural areas;
- iv. All new and renovated public buildings and transport systems be made accessible;
- v. All international and regional funding agencies for infrastructure development to include universal and inclusive design concepts in their loan/grant award criteria.

Key Actions

- Amend the existing Building Code to ensure universal access;
- Conduct an Access Audit of all Government and public buildings and space;
- Enact the Vanuatu Accessibility Code;
- In collaboration with disability organizations, NGOs and civil society groups such as professional architecture and engineering associations and others in the corporate sector, support the establishment of a national mechanism to promote accessible environment;
- Create access officers whose functions include providing architects/designers/developers with technical advice and information on access codes and application of inclusive design, and appropriate technology in the natural and built environments;
- Establish appraisal mechanisms on how codes and standards are developed, applied and enforced and how they have increased accessibility.

Key Indicators

- Building Code is amended for stricter enforcement provisions for universal access by 2010.
- Access Audit of all Government and public buildings and space is conducted by 2009.
- Awards of most innovative inclusive / universal design is awarded annually commencing December 2008.
- Access officers are trained and recruited by 2010.
- Adopt the Australian Standards for universal access by 2009.
- Public parking areas to have provisions for vehicles transporting persons with disabilities and signage erected by 2009.
- Two accessible vehicles to be operating in Port Vila and Santo by 2009.
- Number of building permits granted based on inclusion of universal designs reported to Ministry of Justice & Social Welfare and the National Disability Committee by 2009.
- Number of infrastructural assistance entered into based on universal designs is reported annually to the Ministry of Justice and Social Welfare and the National Disability Committee by 2009.

8.6 POVERTY ALLEVIATION

Policy Directive: To reduce the increasing trend of poverty particularly in urban pockets impacting persons with disabilities and nationally through a poverty alleviation policy and programme.

This policy directs Government Departments to adhere to the commitment of the Millennium Development Goal No. 1 to halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of persons with disabilities whose income / consumption is less than one dollar a day.

'Poverty' has been used in Vanuatu to refer to poverty of 'opportunities' and is the term described by the UNDP Human Development Report of 1999. Since the 2002 Asian Development Report on '*Hardship in Vanuatu*', these two terms are now being used together. The World Bank's PovertyNet programme defines poverty as follows:

Poverty is hunger. Poverty is lack of shelter. Poverty is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not having access to school and not knowing how to read. Poverty is not having a job, a fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water. Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom.

The United Nations estimates that almost half of the world's population lives on less than \$2 a day. The Millennium Development Goal No. 1 is to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015. In Vanuatu there is no official data to tell us the level of poverty in the country, let alone the level of poverty amongst people with disabilities.

The Prioritized Action Agenda recognizes that it will not be possible to raise the welfare of the people because, '...There is still substantial hardship and poverty and increasing unemployment, especially among young people...' If we take the definition of poverty stated by the World Bank, then for most of the 6,800 ni-Vanuatu people with disabilities who have not been able to access entitlements available to other members of society, including health, food, education, employment and other basic social services, *poverty hits them not just as hard as the young people, but harder, because of their already vulnerable position.*

Eliminating poverty is unlikely to be achieved unless the rights and needs of persons with disabilities are taken into account.

Key Strategy

Minimize the chances of persons with disability becoming poor and more marginalized by developing pro-poor policies and programmes.

Key Actions

- National poverty alleviation programmes include views and concerns of persons with disability;
- Adequate rural development funds towards services for the benefit of persons with disability are allocated to provincial governments;
- Social protection schemes such as school subsidies and/or health insurance for poor families with children and elderly people with physical and mental disabilities are established;
- National strategy for the prevention of causes of disability is developed;

- Self-help organizations and rehabilitation services are supported through direct government grants;
- Resource allocation for persons with disabilities in the national budget is increased.

Key Indicators

- National Poverty Alleviation Programme with the inclusion of disability needs developed by 2009.
- Provincial allocation of VT 200,000 be increase by 2009.
- Policy of subsidy and for support to the most disadvantaged of persons with disability is developed by Provincial Governments by 2009.
- National Prevention Policy is developed by the National Disability Committee by 2009.

8.7 EARLY DETECTION, EARLY INTERVENTION AND EDUCATION

Policy Directive: To initiate public education campaigns directed at early detection and the prevention of the most preventable causes of disability.

Government reaffirms that every human being has the inherent right to life and children with disabilities shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by their parents.

Government also reaffirms the central place of the family, particularly women, as givers of support, educators and in many cases 24 hours of caring duties and acknowledges that many do not have adequate information to properly adequate care and support for family members who have a disability.

8.7.1 EARLY DETECTION & INTERVENTION

The early detection of disability in infants and young children from the age of 0 to 4 years old is of paramount importance because failure to detect, identify and intervene and support their parents and caregivers results in secondary disabling conditions which further limit their capacity to benefit from educational and life opportunities. In this vicious cycle, the exclusion of children and youths with disabilities from education results in their exclusion from opportunities for further development, diminishes their access to vocational education and training, prevents them from achieving economic and social independence and further increases their vulnerability to poverty. At present there are no standard procedures in the Department of Health to assess children born in the hospitals or clinics who have any disabilities. This includes procedures as to what should be done in the event that they have been identified with a specific disability.

The detection of disabilities in children, for example, is usually left to parents who then bring their children to the attention of health officials or the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People. However, without support from Government VSDP is unable to provide this much needed service.

In many instances parents may identify disability in their child but without any training, they cannot make any intervention and therefore place the development of their child at serious risk. What must be strengthened is the development of a referral system whereby VSDP staff can assist the health staff in developing programmes catering to the specific need of a baby and vice versa. One of the reason for failure to detect disability at an early age is parents' lack of understanding and awareness about how to prevent disability from happening and, further, how to care for these children and young people who have disabilities. The types of services offered should be a combined effort between the Health and Education Departments and a service provider such as the VSDP. The Ministry of Health should therefore establish adequate early detection and identification services in hospitals, health centres and aid post with referral systems to early intervention services such as VSDP for infants and children from birth to four years old. The Ministry of Education should also include provisions for training parents and caregivers in their policy.

Funds and programmes to support parents and caregivers should be established nationally to recognize the caring service provided by this group. It is recommended that schooling subsidies for children with disabilities and parents with disabilities who have children going to schools be introduced by the Education Department . At present VT 200,000 are provided for in Provincial Government budgets. It is recommended that 50 percent of these funds be made available for non-income earning families who have a member who is disabled.

8.7.2 Unmet Needs of People with Disabilities

Information currently available supports very strongly the urgency of providing help not only to infants and young children with disabilities, but also to adults with disability, caregivers and the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People.

Table 1 Unmet Needs of People with Disabilities in the TAFEA Province, 2005

Treatment Needs		Aids / Assistive Devices	
Doctor/Nurse	78	Wheelchair	35
Fieldworker	155	Hearing Aid	10
Physiotherapist	6	Glasses	22
Eye tests	28	Orthotics	5
Hearing tests	75	Prosthetic - Arm	1
Medicine	14	Prosthetic - Leg	3
Local Massage	10	White cane	4
Speech/Language Therapy	13	Total	80
Total	379		
Communication Needs		Education Needs	
Language Development	11	Primary School	36
Sign Language	59	Secondary School	3
Total	70	Tertiary Education	1
Job/Work		Rural Development	19
Job training	14	Classroom support	60
Community Support			
Home Support	7		
Parent Support	3		

Source: Jones & Pascoe, 2005, p. 22.

The Department of Health, whose programmes have largely left out disability, should become more involved in assisting the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People to provide such a national service. In addition, the growing incidence of non-communicable diseases currently being exhibited, points for more professional association between the Health Department and the VSDP. A Disability Unit, similar to the NCD Unit or the HIV/AIDS Units, within the Department should be established, with adequate human and financial resources to address disability.

8.7.3 NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

The last survey on non-communicable diseases was conducted in 1998. Recent data about NCD-related diseases recorded between 1999 and 2003 shows that 2,770 cases were admitted (Harrison, 2004). In brief, Harrison reported that between 1999 and 2003:

- Heart diseases increased from 140 to 175, representing a 25 percent increase.
- Hypertension increased from 113 to 189, an increase of 67 percent.
- Diabetes increased from 92 to 168, representing a 82.6 percent increase.
- Cancer almost doubled from 79 to 153 and representing a 93.7 percent increase.

Cardiovascular arrests appear to remain the same. It should be noted that in 2002 the admission rate for all the diseases reported, with the exception of hypertension, declined. This could be due to non reporting by health facilities.

8.7.4 PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS & EDUCATION

Comprehensive information about causes of disability that includes the latest medical information about disability as well as information on myths about causes of disability should be developed and disseminated to parents, caregivers, health and other officials by the Ministry of Health and CBR organizations such as VSDP. Public awareness campaigns through posters and videos based on such approved information can be effectively disseminated throughout the country through popular theatre such as the Frangipani Kids and Wan Smol Bag. The use of radio broadcast, which is currently not utilized at all by disability organizations, provides another avenue where such information can reach thousands of people throughout the country.

Public awareness on the nature and causes of disabilities, rehabilitation services, rights training, training programmes for treatment regimes and many more is not only important for parents and caregivers and persons with disabilities, but also for officials across all sectors of Government. Knowledge about the issues which continue to support the barriers to the full participation of persons with disabilities must be disseminated far and wide in order for them to be dismantled. Developing a public awareness campaign should consider long-term programmes rather than one-off campaigns provided to once to one particular community. Ministries of Education, Health, Labour, Police, Correctional Services, Women's Affairs, Labour Department, Public Utilities, Public Service and Electoral Commission all have a role to play in developing such a campaign. A campaign that shares the same message which is provided to a broad spectrum of people should ensure that all people share a common understanding of what Government policies and programmes exist to promote rights of persons with disabilities in Vanuatu.

While section 8.8 below speaks more to access to ICT, other public awareness campaigns providing information on access to justice, to protection during natural disasters such as cyclones, to participate in cultural life recreation and leisure, to social protection, to be free from discrimination and exploitation and all the issues covered in this document and more can only support the National Government's vision to have an educated, healthy and wealthy population.

Key Strategies

- i. To establish mechanisms for early detection and intervention at an early an age as possible;
- ii. For all infants and young children (birth to four years old) to have access to and receive community-based early intervention services to ensure survival, with support and training for their families.

Key Actions

- Governments, in collaboration with others, to collect comprehensive data on children with disabilities, from birth to 16 years old which should be used for planning appropriate early intervention and educational provision, resources and support services, from birth through school age;
- Ministries of Health and other concerned ministries and the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People establish adequate early detection and identification services in hospitals, primary health care systems, with referral systems to early intervention services for all infants and children with disabilities (0-4 years old);
- Ministry of Health and Education, in conjunction with community-based rehabilitation service providers routinely screen school children for hearing and visual impairments;

- Ministries of Health and Education to establish early intervention services, in collaboration with other concerned ministries, self-help organizations, NGOs and community based agencies, to provide early intervention, support and training to all infants and children with disabilities (birth to four years old) and their families;
- Ministries of Health, Education and other concerned Ministries, work in partnership with NGOs at the national and provincial level to conduct public awareness campaigns to inform families of children with disabilities, schools and local communities, of the rights of children and youth with disabilities to participate in education at all levels, in urban and rural areas, and with particular emphasis on the inclusion of girls with disabilities where there is a gender imbalance in school attendance.

Key Indicators

- Department of Health has available statistics by age, sex, disability type, location and type of programme developed for child and parent by 2009.
- Department of Health includes budget for rehabilitation services for persons with disability by 2009.
- Department of Health provides direct grants or sub-contracts the Vanuatu Society for Disabled People to carry out rehabilitation services by 2009.
- By 2009 a programme to screen all children in Primary Schools is developed by the Department of Health.
- A public awareness campaign for identifying early symptoms of disability and available programmes is developed by 2009.

8.8 ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

Policy Directive: To generate, collate and disseminate information on the situation of persons with disabilities to provide a sound basis for policy formulation and action and to increase public awareness.

Government acknowledges that lack of national data is a barrier impeding the development of appropriate policies and programmes to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in national development. Government further acknowledges that access to information and communication is a basic human right; however, progress in Vanuatu to break the digital divide amongst its total population will not be achievable in the foreseeable future.

Access to ICT assumes firstly that people have access to school and education. For people with disabilities, the majority of them do not have universal access to services. Nor has the education system itself been geared to provide education to people with disabilities. Secondly, the majority of people with disabilities live in rural areas where there is little opportunity to access computers and at the most basic level, electricity or telephone lines. Online processes for registration, banking or shopping transactions have yet to become an everyday process in Vanuatu.

Government's efforts to strengthening the capacity of the population to enter into the digital world requires building the foundation such as strengthening the education system to enable children and adults to access learning, financial and social security, independent and improved lifestyles, development of policies of current telecommunication structures to provide universal access to communication and build confidence of persons with disabilities to participate. Building the capacity to read and write, sign and read Braille are also fundamental rights to including deaf and blind people to participate in society. Support for the development of a standardized sign language has yet to be understood as a right and for it to be developed.

The Government already has an ICT policy that can be amended to provide accessibility guidelines for persons with disabilities. Telecom Vanuatu Limited is a member of the International Telecommunication Union and can implement any directives from ITU. As a shareholder, Government is duty bound to ensure that TVL complies with international standards supporting requirements of people with disability. Specialists in the print, broadcast and electronic media in Vanuatu play an important part in ICT. While it may not be possible now to implement the BMF strategies identified in Priority No. 5, they nevertheless should be made aware of the importance of the different requirements needed to ensure that people with disabilities are included.

As a member of the Forum which endorsed the Pacific Plan in 2005, Vanuatu is part of the regional body which supports the Pacific Digital Strategy. The process of providing an enabling environment where the digital divide is dismantled will take some time to achieve in Vanuatu. Recognizing this, one suggestion is to learn from the experiences of others in the neighbouring Pacific island countries and other countries in the world and adopt systems most suitable for Vanuatu's situation. At this point in time when the Pacific Digital Strategy is being developed, Vanuatu can flag, yet again, compliance with, and, incorporation of international standards supporting requirements of people with disability into the Plan.

Key Strategies

- i. To promote access to ICT by persons with disability;
- ii. Promote a standardized sign language for Vanuatu;

Key Actions

- Develop a National ICT Policy;
- Examine, amend existing Government ICT Policy and adopt accessibility guidelines for persons with disabilities in the national ICT policy;
- Ensure national communication agencies (Telecom Vanuatu Limited) incorporate accessibility standards for persons with disabilities in their international ICT standards;
- Reduced rates for access to telephones;
- Provide various forms of incentives, including exemption of duties for ICT devices used by persons with disabilities and subsidize the cost of assistive technology equipment to ensure that they are affordable for persons with disabilities in need;
- Support the development of a standardized sign language for Vanuatu and disseminate and teach the results in national teaching facilities particularly the Vanuatu Teachers College, Vanuatu Nursing School and other relevant teaching institutions;
- Support the Forum Regional Digital Strategy by ensuring that new and existing technologies are based on disability inclusive standards and are developed on a universal design concept.

Key Indicators

- A National ICT Policy inclusive of needs of persons with disability is developed by 2010.
- Review of current policies and legislation on ICT is conducted by 2009.
- TVL incorporates accessibility standards for persons with disability by 2009.
- Duty exemption for assistive devices / technology is legislated for by 2009.
- Standardized sign language such as the Melanesian Sign Language is adopted by Vanuatu by 2008.
- Sign language is taught in national institutions by 2009.

8.9 REGIONAL COOPERATION

Policy Directive: To enhance the sharing of information and experience on the advancement of people with disabilities and to strengthen their effectiveness in advocacy at regional and international forums.

Government recognizes that in order to fulfil its commitment to promote the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in national development, it cannot be done by Government only: Persons with disabilities themselves, NGOs, donor partners, regional bodies and international agencies are keys to the success of any Government programme.

Sharing of experiences and information and lessons learned elsewhere is also a key to advancing the status of persons with disabilities. As a member of the Forum, experiences from countries more developed in the disability field than Vanuatu offer one avenue for regional cooperation. Also as a member of the Forum, such regional cooperation through the endorsement of the BMF has set a stage for further cooperation. However, as most Pacific Island Governments are now just beginning to incorporate disability into their national plans, collaboration with national and regional NGOs is also important.

Already the Government has collaborated with the Asian Development Centre on Disability in 2003 with the result that the national policy directives were formulated and approved in 2004; in 2005 Government collaborated with UN ESCAP which provided a national perspective on service to persons with disabilities and supported the formulation of the National Disability Committee; its collaboration with PWD Australia and DPA saw Vanuatu supporting a person with disability during the negotiation of the UN Disability Convention. As a member of the Forum, Vanuatu has supported the inclusion of the BMF in the Pacific Plan. In this regard, the Forum held the.

Support from the Forum Secretariat saw the staging of the first ever Government/NGO interaction at the Regional Disability Seminar in 2005. Regional disability programmes already exist with donor partners in this region. Collaboration with donor partners therefore is most essential to the successful implementation of this Policy.

Monitoring and dissemination of timely reports on the progress of implementing this Policy nationally to stakeholders across the board is vital. Placement of the National Disability Policy and other materials on the Government website or the PRISM website is one possible venue that can be considered. Adopting the policy into an easy-to-read format and translating it into Bislama must be a priority. Inclusion of the status of persons with disabilities in national reports such as the MDG, and reports on Conventions such as the CRC and CEDAW is a duty.

For these actions and other actions outlined in the National Disability Policy, each Ministry and line Departments should identify the most relevant agencies both nationally and regionally to assist with achieving their specific targets. This collaborative spirit to partner with NGOs to promote an issue on the national or even local level already exists within each department. Now it is time to extend that collaborative spirit to disability organizations, human rights bodies, education agencies, architectural businesses, legislators, donor partners, NGOs and many others within the region to ensure that the goal of promoting an inclusive, barrier-free and rights-based society in Vanuatu is fulfilled.

Key Strategies

- i. To collaborate with partners both internally and externally to promote rights of persons with disabilities;
- ii. To obtain support from partners to ensure that this Policy is successful.

Key Actions

- Learn from experiences of similar countries on how they incorporate disability into national development plans such as the inclusive education strategy in Papua New Guinea;
- Seek donor support for research and development;
- Share development on disability on the regional website;
- Translate the Policy, UN Convention and other relevant documents into Bislama;
- Ensure that national reports contain reports on the status of persons with disability.

Key Indicators

- Line ministries identify experiences from similarly placed countries such as Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji best suited to their specific target areas as an ongoing exercise.
- Donor support for the implementation of the Policy is obtained by 2009.
- Information of disability is placed on the PRISM website by 2009.
- National Disability Policy and Plan of Action is translated into Bislama by 2008.
- Regular reports made to the public about the implementation of the Policy made annually.

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