

This statement is delivered on behalf of Nuanua O Le Alofa, the national disability advocacy organization for persons with disabilities in Samoa. This statement addresses the status of persons with diverse disabilities, living throughout Samoa.

During the 2016 review, 14 recommendations were made in a joint statement by NOLA and SENESE. We are pleased to congratulate the Government of Samoa for the successful ratification of the UNCRPD in 2016 and the completion of the CRPD legislative compliance review. The Government of Samoa should also be commended for the work completed thus far under its obligations under Article 4.3 of CRPD to work with and effectively consult with persons with disabilities in national developments and we encourage the government to continue to strengthen these efforts. However there is still significant work needed to be done to ensure persons with disabilities are able to achieve full and effective participation in all aspects of society.

In the development of the CRPD Shadow Report, NOLA found that less than 5% of surveyed participants knew of and were able to access the Government's provision for free health care within public health systems. This is of particular concern given that this has been reported as a successful social protection measure most recently through Samoa's VNR.

Inclusive education efforts also require strengthening with 9.6% of persons with disabilities having never been to school, and literacy rates of the disability population at only 38.1%.

And finally, whilst there has been a strengthened commitment to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian emergency response mechanisms, the provision of translation of essential risk communication into accessible formats at the national level remains inconsistent.

Therefore, we propose the following recommendations

- 1: Significant work is still needed to strengthen social protection mechanisms for persons with disabilities in Samoa, including ensuring that the provision of service free healthcare for persons with disabilities is implemented.
- 2: A strengthened commitment to mainstreamed inclusive education is encouraged. Through NOLA's development of the CRPD Shadow report, it was found that many children with disabilities in rural areas are left to sit in the back of classrooms or discouraged from attending school at all. This requires urgent attention.
- 3: A legislative and / or policy commitment to translating essential information into accessible formats within the humanitarian response mechanisms would greatly improve the ability of persons with disabilities to remain safe and protected during times of emergencies.

Thank you so much for your time and consideration, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any question or would like to discuss the status of persons with disabilities in Samoa further.