

## Giving a voice to children with disabilities

Australia – Deakin University: Voices of Pacific Children with Disability

### SUMMARY OF PROJECT

The project seeks to develop a simple and effective method for children with diverse disabilities to express or communicate their life priorities and human rights issues through the use of ICT and other resources. . The project also aims to achieve the transferability and scalability of this method, utilizing accessible ICT, by designing education activities and resources for governments, services providers, and community members both in the target country and globally.

### QUOTE

*“The voices of children with disabilities are largely missing in the development agenda, which means that their needs and priorities are not adequately addressed in service delivery and policy design.”*

—Ms. Erin Wilson, Associate Professor, Deakin University

### FACTS & FIGURES

- 89 children with disabilities aged between 5 and 18 living in rural and urban areas have participated in the project.
- Three films were produced and are available both on YouTube and on the project’s website (including captioned for hard of hearing and audio described versions).
- Overall use of the project website in the first three months of operation included 288 users, 826 page views, and 393 sessions.
- Three in-country workshops in Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu and one full-day workshop in Australia have been held, with more than 100 total participants.

### PROBLEMS TARGETED

In low-income countries children with disabilities often experience communication barriers, and data suggests that as a result they experience significant disadvantages, including: diminished rates of school

attendance, retention, and advancement; lower rates of employment; increased poverty; and poor access to health care and assistive devices. Furthermore, governments and service providers do not seek the views of children with disabilities because they are often viewed as “too hard to engage.”

### **SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY**

The project team developed a set of inclusive tools to overcome barriers in verbal or oral communication and made these available on the project website. These are: (1) a photo library with a set of local photos representing life areas broadly reflecting the Articles of the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons; (2) a sound library consisting of a set of digital audio recordings of short local sounds; (3) a camera used to document important life priorities; (4) a “story in a bag” containing objects that represent a range of life areas and interests; (5) a doll that can be used to speak about what is important; (6) a guided tour or walkabout, which enables children to guide or lead researchers around their community; and (7) a drawing so as to be able to paint something and tell a story. A The website was developed in a way that enables people with and without disabilities to learn and understand methods of inclusive communication.

### **OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY**

The project team wants to extend the reach of the current project and test inclusive tools in new contexts, such as monitoring and evaluation, but currently there are no funds available. The three films produced for the project will be entered into international human rights/disability film festivals in 2015 and 2016.



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