

## **International Disability Alliance (IDA)**

Disabled Peoples' International, Down Syndrome International, Inclusion International, International Federation of Hard of Hearing People, Rehabilitation International, World Blind Union, World Federation of the Deaf, World Federation of the DeafBlind, World Network of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry, Arab Organization of Disabled People, European Disability Forum, Red Latinoamericana de Organizaciones no Gubernamentales de Personas con Discapacidad y sus familias (RIADIS)

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### Suggestions for disability-relevant recommendations to be included in the Concluding Observations CEDAW Committee 46<sup>th</sup> Session (12 to 30 July 2010, NY)

The International Disability Alliance (IDA) has prepared the following suggestions for the concluding observations, based on references to persons with disabilities to be found in the reports on Fiji.

#### **FIJI**

##### **State Report**

##### **Women with Disability**

98. Women with disabilities are one of the most marginalized groups in societies, as they are multiply disadvantaged through their status as women, as persons with disabilities, and are over-represented among persons living in poverty. Women and girls with disabilities, to a greater extent than boys and men face discrimination within the family, are denied access to health care (especially reproductive health care and advice), education, vocational training, employment and income generating opportunities, and are often excluded from social and community activities.

##### **Mental Health**

290. The Mental Health Treatment Act (Cap ) provides the legal and regulatory framework for mental health treatment in Fiji. In essence the legislation restricts the scope of operation of the only mental institution in Fiji, the St. Giles hospital in Suva to treating mental illness. The Act does not provide rehabilitation and other preventative measures to mitigate and reduce the incidence of mental illness. The legislation is currently under review by the Fiji Law Reform Commission. There is a need to address rehabilitation and reintegration following hospital treatment as well as advancements in treatment in the past 30 years. The Fiji Law Reform Commission is aware of the need for a paradigm shift in the legal framework. 'The review is obviously needed as there are stringent demands that a new legislation ought to take into account the emergence of more sophisticated systems of patient advocacy and the increasingly complex medico-legal demands of clinical practice' (Fiji Law Reform Commission).

291. Mental illness is highly stigmatized in Fiji. In Fiji, mental health care is part of primary health care but actual meaningful treatment of serious mental disorders is not readily available. Mental health is a concern with the increasing number of patients admitted to St Giles Psychiatric Hospital, the only mental institution in the country.

### List of Issues

27. The State party (CEDAW/C/FJI/4, para. 291) recognizes that mental illness is highly stigmatized in Fiji. Please provide updated information on the steps taken by the State party to improve the mental health support services and to ensure their accessibility by women across the country. Please also provide information on awareness and outreach programmes to address stigmatization and stereotyped generalizations in order to improve women's accessibility to mental health-care services.

### **Recommendations from IDA**

- To consider ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.
- To pay special attention to the precarious situation of women with disabilities and adopt targeted measures to eliminate discrimination against girls and women with disabilities, ensuring their enjoyment of rights on equal basis with others.
- To adopt social-policy programmes which enable women with disabilities to live an inclusive, self-determined and independent life.
- To adopt measures to raise awareness about mental health issues within a social rather than medical model, and with a trauma-informed perspective, to raise awareness about the full and equal human rights of people with psychosocial disabilities, and to develop mental health services and social supports based on these principles.
- To abolish all legal provisions authorizing involuntary commitments to psychiatric hospitals and involuntary mental health treatment.
- To take appropriate support to ensure access to reproductive rights
- To provide more information on indigenous women with disability.
- To take appropriate measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women with disability included indigenous women with disability.
- To take appropriate measures to ensure that women and girls with disabilities are included in education, training and employment programmes.
- To ensure that women with disabilities have the right to choose where they want to live and have the support of community services or personal assistance.