**Dirt Radio: Climate Change and Disability Special**

**Host: Pauline Vetuna**

**Guests: Cubbie Mako, Nafitalai UIluinikorotabu**

**Transcript by Leilani Fuimaono**

*[introduction music plays]*

VOICEOVER: Dirt Radio. Organic friends of the Earth, activism, underground, political action, necessary, wind farms, Indigenous struggles, land rights, anti-nuclear, nanotechnology, climate change, coal barons, mining magnets, activists, educating communities, transforming communities, mobilizing a sustainable planet. Get involved now. Friends of the Earth. Friends of the Earth. Friends of the Earth. Dirt Radio.

ANNOUNCER: You are listening to a special edition of Dirt Radio for 3CR's Disability Day broadcast. First up, you will hear from a member of the Fiji Disabled People's Federation on inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Disaster Risk Reduction Program. You will also hear from Cubbie Mako discussing the impact of climate change on their disabled child, the Philippines, and the necessity of inclusion of climate change responses in NDIS plans.

NAFITALAI: My name is Nafitalai Uluinikorotabu. I am the ICT Officer for the Fiji Disabled People's Federation and I'm also the youth advocate for the organizations. The Fiji Disabled People's Federation is an organization that was mainly run by persons with disability in Fiji, and we are all for the advocacy and the rights for persons with disability in Fiji, the whole of Fiji. And we work closely with the Pacific Disability Forum on the area of advocacy, also. We have 15 branches all over the whole of Fiji that work well with rights and advocacy for persons with disability in Fiji.

PAULINE: Could you tell us about what the Disaster Risk Reduction Program is?

NAFITALAI: The Disaster Risk Reduction is a program that is run by a friend of mine called Luis Amano for the Fiji Disabled People's Federation, from the perspective of a person with disability, and the inclusion of persons with disabilities. When it comes to talks for the Disaster Risk Reduction Program, we work closely with the NDMO right here in Fiji, which is the National Disaster Media Organization.

PAULINE: So, I'm really wanting to know more about the role of disabled Fijians in climate responses in Fiji. Could you speak to that and specifically in regards to disabled people organizing around climate change responses and ensuring that, with regards to disaster responses related to climate change, that disabled people aren't left out of those responses?

NAFITALAI: With regards to the theme of leaving no one behind, I think it is a very crucial thing for persons with disability to be included in the talks of, when it comes to climate change and climate crisis here in Fiji. Not just in Fiji, but in the whole of the Pacific, because I think the disability community and disability sector is the one that is really neglected when it comes to a climate crisis.

For example, if there's a cyclone or there's floods, usually persons with disability are the last ones that are informed, just because of the forms of means of communication in Fiji, whether it be radio, TV, or the internet. So I think it is something that needs to be looked at.

And I think it's one thing that the Fiji Disabled People's Federation and also of the affiliates of the FDP has been looking at quite closely, working with relevant stakeholders in looking at the care and the roles that a person with disability has in a village community, and also in the urban areas.

PAULINE: Have you found the main climate change advocacy organisations in the Pacific that are run by Pacific Islanders, have you found them receptive to the message that disabled people of the Pacific should not be left behind?

NAFITALAI: Yeah, I think for Fiji, we have got a really good feedback from all of the donors and stakeholders and even the government, because Fiji is one of the Pacific Islanders that have actually rectified the UNCRPD. Not just the UNCRPD, but also we have moved forth by having an act, a disability rights act that has now been rectified by the government. So pushes have been made to government, and also to donors and stakeholders to say that the rights of persons with disability is a human right.

And it's not just the right for an individual that is facing these problems, when it comes to climate crisis. But what I've seen in the past few years, in the area of advocacy for climate change, climate risk, disaster risk reduction, I've really seen that it is moving well, because of the push from the national DPOs, DPOs organizations like the spinal injuries organization. The spinal injuries organization, you've got the United Blind Persons of Fiji, you've got the Fiji Association for the Deaf, the Psychosocial Survivors Association, which is all affiliated under Fiji Disabled People's Federation.

So when you have a really strong organization, really strong body advocating in the rights for persons with disability, in regards to disaster risk reduction, we have seen that there's a lot more change in Fiji, due to the voice that has been heard not just in Fiji, but in the Pacific, through these DPOs.

PAULINE: Fantastic. I'm interested because this program is broadcast in Melbourne, Australia, and there are quite a few Pacific Islanders in Australia, who are organizing around climate advocacy here, how can Pacific Islanders who live in diaspora, who live outside of the islands, outside of Fiji, support the work of organisations like Fiji Disabled People's Federation?

NAFITALAI: I think the islanders that reciting overseas could help a lot in advocating for persons with disability, not just in Fiji, but in the Pacific, through just storytelling. I think in the Pacific, we are good storytellers. We tell stories and it's just word by mouth. Just by having that voice with friends and family from the Pacific is just ringing alarm bells and saying this is an issue that not just persons with disability are facing, but it's a national crisis. Where we are left behind and we get to feel neglected by society.

But I think one thing that really could be done is through storytelling, is through sitting and just bringing the issue on the table and saying, “Hey, this is an issue that has been faced in the islands. And I could honestly say that lives have been lost because of the neglect of persons with disability”.

I think the way to go forward for people who are residing overseas, friends and family that are out there, is to just make it a rising issue. Make it so that not just the government here in the Pacific, but the governments in Australia, in the nations across the globe, would know that the Pacific Islanders are the other ones that are really facing the full front of climate change. The full front of disasters here in Fiji, and also the Pacific.

PAULINE: Nafitalai, thank you very much. That was amazing.

NAFITALAI: Thank you.

PAULINE: Is there anything else you would like to say before we close the interview?

NAFITALAI: I think what I would just like to honestly say to, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the radio station for calling in and making this a concern on the International Day for Persons with Disability on the 3rd of December. It's an issue that is based in the Pacific Islands, as I've said. And the only thing that I could say is we are here, we are not forgotten. We are people who have been included in society, that need to be included in society.

Persons with disability have a voice, persons with disability all through the forefront of decision-making, not just in the things, in a national level, but also regional. And I would encourage any person with disability who is sitting at home right now listening to this, is that you have a voice also. Even though if you're still at home, you're not doing anything, you're still looking at forefront. You have a voice, you go out there, you make your voice heard. And, yeah, there's no limits to what a voice can do in the society that we are in now.

PAULINE: Thank you so much.

NAFITALAI: Thank you so much *[speaking in Fijian]*.

*[Pasifika music plays, with spoken word in another language at the end]*

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MEREANI: *[Introducing themselves in Fijian].* You're listening to 3CR's International Day of People with Disability broadcast.

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CUBBIE: I'm a person who is disabled. At the same time, I'm also a carer. So anything about climate change is real and now and urgent for us. We're also in our first year of having a review with the National Disability Insurance Scheme or NDIS, and it seems no one's talking about the connection of what disabled people need with their NDIS packages, or the services they need, in terms of change.

Because 1), on 11th of November, it was reported that there was no rain at all, a single drop in Australia. And then just recently, we had our very first thunderstorm asthma or a couple already. And thirdly, if you've seen the weather patterns or the temperature patterns lately, there's one hot day and it drops, the temperature drops really bad. So, we can't handle that. You have to consider people with upper respiratory tract infections, those with asthma, with multiple disabilities, we're all affected by that.

So if you could include that in your NDIS package, like if you got air conditioning, if you got heating system, can you clean the filters? If you've got a backyard, can this be included in weeding, removing the itchy pollen or the weeds, so you can breathe better? Those kinds of things.

And as well as emergency packages in schools, because here in Victoria as with the the hashtag “educationstate”, how the Victorian education promotes itself, we are for inclusion in education, in mainstream education.

I've got a year three kid, who's in mainstream education and inclusion matters, especially in climate change, in terms of evacuation. No one gets left behind. All means, all. All the kids. If there's an emergency, everyone will be included. How would that affect, if the child is in a different school, let's say, in a special school and you have this X limited number of minutes to evacuate everyone?

So, this is where inclusion matters, in terms of climate change and disability. In terms of, for example, using Auslan versus technology in climate change, what if your batteries don't work anymore in a climate change, in an apocalypse for example? Auslan would work versus an app, that you are so dependent in communicating with your child. Auslan is actually our second language in our home, even though we are of CALD background (or people of color).

Also, I have to connect it with my history, because I was born in a country where my first reality of water and environment in a colonised island in the Pacific was charcoal water, inky water, stuff with garbage in the creeks. Plumes of smoke and heavily contaminated air, that there were so many particles in the air. I had multiple styes in my eyes. Just to have them operated, just to take them off, because it was that heavily polluted.

That was my reality. I knew that I was born in a climate change situation, long before there was a word climate change or climate crisis or climate emergency. That was our reality already. I already was in a land that was colonised, how many times? Three, four times? By different colonisers.

Their factories line our rivers and that's how it goes. We drink water not from our taps, but we have to buy water from distilleries that would, they say, reverse osmosis. That's the only way we could drink water. We live in a village, even though in concrete houses, we had to order water in trucks, you have to order them in advance, or else you won't have running water. That was the reality back then and that was climate crisis.

And before the turn of the century of year 2000, Manila was actually under, not really underwater, but it was so flooded, we couldn't even go anywhere. That was our reality and that was, what? How many years ago? So we all connect that, and what we're seeing now, okay, is it déjà vu? Are we prepared for this?

But now because I know I've got mental health issues, I have medication, I also have a disabled child. How do we handle this now? In a different land also colonised and we're in a settler land, and it's also happening. Why was the creek near us in the West?

So there was an explosion or there was fire and there was plumes of charcoal, inky smoke up in the air and we couldn't breathe. The stench was awful. And the fire was like affecting the West for how many days? So we don't know what was the environmental effect after that.

So that's the reality now, and we need to include that in our NDIS packages.

ANNOUNCER: You've been listening to a special episode of Dirt Radio for 3CR's Disability Day broadcast 2019. Thank you for joining us. You're listening to Power from the Margins on International Day of People with a Disability. If you've just tuned in and want to know more about today's special broadcast, go 3cr.org.au/disabilityday2019.