



**Advocating for Rights &
Promoting Abilities of People
with Disabilities since 1999**

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MEDIA RELEASE

What is the future of young people with disability in Vanuatu?

The reality of how people with disability are treated was evident yesterday when a teenager with intellectual and physical disabilities watched from outside a high wired fence as Luganville's youth celebrated an important event.

The teenage male wanted to go into the Luganville Northern Care Youth Centre open day to join other youth, but his wheelchair could not navigate the uneven path outside the centre, and like a prisoner, he was forced to watch through the wire fence.

"It breaks my heart to see this happening to people with disability, particularly our young people who want to participate, but because of the inaccessibility they are unable to join in as equal citizens," Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association Coordinator, Nelly Caleb, said today.

"It is ironical that the youth centre had a banner at the front saying 'Blessed are the Youth in Heart for they shall see the future', but I have to ask what is the future of our young people with disability?"

"Yesterday's example shows that our country still has a very long way to go before we have an all-inclusive, barrier-free and rights based society for people with disability.

"Even though Vanuatu ratified the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disability in 2008, there needs to be a Disability Act so it can enforce the convention, as it is taking very long to implement changes.

"Whilst there have been some wins including agricultural training, employment and Digicel making structural alterations to a building so a person with disability can gain access with her wheelchair, they are mainly forgotten by our government."

Less than 50 metres from the youth centre, Mrs Caleb had just attended wheelchair training for people with disability at the Mormon Church, when she noticed the teenager watching from outside the fence.

"I'd just congratulated the Mormons for giving 312 wheelchairs to Vanuatu, resulting in more independence and human rights for people with disability when I met the young teenager at the fence.

"In such a short distance, I witnessed the true story facing most people with disability and their lack of accessibility to public places and events.

"Whilst I commended the Mormons in helping people with disability move around freely at home and in the community, enabling them to advocate for themselves, the stark reality is that most people with disability are still treated very differently, as if they're from another planet.

"This type of treatment only makes me want to fight harder for the rights of people with disability and I will continue to advocate for the rights of these people."