Implementation Tips
for USAID Partners

Sharing Resources and Knowledge Among the Global CSO Community　　**Inclusive Development 7** | **2020**

Definitions

Decentralization: A transfer of certain responsibilities and corresponding resources from the central government to local authorities—usually in terms of managing local taxes, city planning, infrastructure, and construction, as well as social services such as water and sanitation, housing, transportation, education, primary health care, culture, and sports. Local-level authorities enjoy decision-making autonomy - within the bounds of existing legislation and national strategies and policies - and manage their allocated budget for the transferred responsibilities. This makes them accountable to the citizens who live within the boundaries of the local authority's mandate.

Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs): Representative organizations that are run by persons with disabilities, working to advance their rights by raising awareness in society, and advocating for their equal rights as citizens. In many low- and middle-income countries, OPDs are community-based organizations operating on the grassroots level and strongly integrated into their local communities..

Partnering with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities for Inclusive Local Development

Q How can my organization identify and work with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to advance inclusive local development?

A OPDs are organizations made up of persons with disabilities and their allies, working to advance the rights of persons with disabilities by raising awareness in society and advocating for equal rights as citizens. In many low- and middle-income countries, OPDs are community-based organizations operating on the grassroots level and strongly integrated into their local communities.

Different OPDs have different mandates, just like NGOs, businesses, and other organizations. The mandates of some OPDs center on advocacy and promoting citizen participation. Other OPDs aim to help with service referrals and provide linkages between the disability community and economic development stakeholders.

Identifying OPDs

OPDs exist in nearly every community around the globe. Some OPDs are more robust than others; they have different levels of capacity, visibility, and experience. Some OPDs distinguish themselves by focusing on specific disabilities; some have members and mandates focusing on a broad range of disabilities. Strong OPD networks exist in certain communities, with organizations working together to advocate for the common goal of advancing the rights of all persons with disabilities.

Regional OPDs include member organizations from different countries. They can serve as helpful mechanisms for identifying and connecting with individual country- or community-specific organizations. Important regional OPDs include:

- African Disability Forum (ADF)
- Arab Organization of Persons with Disabilities
- Latin American Network of Non-Governmental Organizations of Persons with Disabilities and their Families (RIADIS)

1 International Disability Alliance
2 United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Definitions, cont.

Inclusive local development: a development model that promotes equality and the widest social participation at the grassroots level. It is based on the key notions of decentralization and local citizen participation and the principle that inclusion leads to better outcomes. Under this model, development policies and programs are designed, planned, implemented, and evaluated in ways that allow all people - including those with disabilities - to contribute to the transformation of their societies.

- Pacific Disability Forum
- ASEAN Disability Forum

Global OPDs can also connect members around the world. Examples include:

- World Blind Union
- Inclusion International
- Down Syndrome International
- World Federation of the Deafblind

All of these OPDs are members of the International Disability Alliance (IDA),[1] a network of global and regional OPDs that promotes the effective and full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).[2] IDA also works to ensure that the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are CRPD-compliant. The network is an excellent resource and mechanism for identifying OPDs around the world.

Why is it important to partner with OPDs?

- Partnering with OPDs on programs encourages greater participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities into mainstream international development initiatives. OPDs can increase a program's focus on issues affecting persons with disabilities, advise implementers on how to make their programming more accessible, and identify persons with disabilities to participate in activities.

- It is important to include OPDs in all parts of the program cycle in line with the disability rights slogan, "nothing about us without us."

- OPD mandates vary. Focusing on the purpose of your program will help guide you in selecting which OPDs will be appropriate partners.

- Implementers can promote meaningful and inclusive social change and increase the voices of persons with disabilities in civil society by intentionally including disability issues within community-based development initiatives.

How can organizations work with and support OPDs?

- Fund OPDs to conduct awareness-raising campaigns on topics relevant to persons with disabilities such as rights, issues, and concerns at the community level and to promote the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities throughout public life.

- Assist organizations to register as official OPDs in their districts; registration gives OPDs the agency and recognition to formally

Balancing Advocacy and Service Delivery Roles is Key

When partnering with OPDs, it is important to be aware that an OPD may run the risk of a conflict of interest. Some OPDs are both the service provider and advocate for persons with disabilities. While both roles are necessary, a conflict may arise when advocacy focuses on funding for service provision. If an OPD has received money from a government to provide services, their independence and ability to challenge government authorities may be limited. Conversely, some government funding may include requirements for advocacy as part of their work. Whenever possible, advocacy and service delivery functions coexisting within the same organization should be managed independently to avoid conflicts of interest and be consistent with any regulations.

conduct activities and work in collaboration with local, national, and international stakeholders.

- Help build OPD capacity by supporting preparation of an annual work plan—with the participation of all members—that clearly outlines plans for institutional development and program activities.

- Help build the capacity of OPDs to conduct disability sensitization workshops for government and non-government agencies.

- Establish small grants for OPDs to implement activities.

What is inclusive local development and why is it important?

Inclusive local development (ILD) is a development model that promotes equality and the widest social participation at the grassroots level. It is based on the key notions of decentralization and local citizen participation and the principle that inclusion leads to better outcomes. ILD means that development policies and programs are designed, planned, implemented, and evaluated in ways that allow all people—including those with disabilities—to contribute to the transformation of their societies. ILD allows persons with disabilities to enjoy the same rights as any other members of society and to provide knowledge and expertise toward the design and implementation of policies.

ILD programs typically seek to improve the welfare and inclusion of persons with disabilities in community life. Specific objectives should be determined in consultation with local communities, including local authorities and civil society—especially OPDs. The objective of ILD programs is typically to increase participation of persons with disabilities in different sectors and geographical areas. For example, they may seek to advance the rights of persons with disabilities, improve accessibility of community spaces and activities, or amend public policies and programs so that they are more inclusive. In urban areas, where resources are often greater and OPDs, service providers, and authorities are more clearly identified, ILD programs are often included in decentralization processes and programs. ILD therefore encourages local authorities to develop a sense of responsibility and the capacity to address disability issues. In rural areas, where services are often limited and decentralization processes may be less advanced, ILD initiatives mobilize local development stakeholders—including local authorities, NGOs, public and private service providers, and others—to promote social change through the inclusion of disability issues in community-based development initiatives.

Main objectives of ILD programs	Examples of expected results from ILD programs
• Strengthen the capacity of OPDs to increase their participation in development processes and local governance.	ILD programs focus on analyzing and modifying local practices regarding disability issues and effective implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities. Expected results might include:
• Facilitate networking of local OPDs to increase collaboration and build a common vision to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities	• Local authorities and other local stakeholders give greater consideration to disability issues and recommendations made by OPDs when drafting and implementing policies and actions.
• Promote implementation of a local participatory needs assessment focused on persons with disabilities.	• Persons with disabilities gain improved access to local services, enabling greater social participation.
• Create links and partnerships among OPDs and local authorities by facilitating forums for dialogue between local authorities and civil society actors to promote the development of inclusive policies and programs, and funding.	• Persons with disabilities are more aware of existing services and can access them more easily.
• Create a crosscutting network of local inclusive services and facilitate effective systems for referral and information. OPDs often act as referral mechanisms, connecting their members to necessary services such as inclusive health, education, and employment opportunities.	• The individual and collective capacities of persons with disabilities are strengthened, particularly in terms of constructive advocacy vis-a-vis local authorities.
• Educate and train local stakeholders on disability issues, supporting them to adapt their practices to meet the needs, interests, and priorities of persons with disabilities.	

For More Information

For this or other issues of *Implementation Tips*, please visit NGOConnect.net. The website is a dynamic and interactive portal dedicated to connecting and strengthening CSOs, networks, and CSO support organizations worldwide.

How can organizations support OPDs to advance ILD?

Programs that focus on ILD should work with OPDs and local authorities to ensure inclusive and participatory design of local development priorities and plans. Working with OPDs ensures that programs are implemented in a truly inclusive manner and benefit persons with disabilities. Relatedly, by working with both OPDs and local authorities on ILD, implementers are advancing inclusive and more effective local governance and development.

There are many ways that stakeholders—including those from the private sector, government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), technical and vocational training organizations, financial services, and others—can partner with OPDs to promote meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in local development. Keep in mind the following as you consider partnering with OPDs to promote ILD:

- OPDs can help implementers better understand and respond to specific needs of persons with disabilities in the target communities.
- OPDs can help identify individuals with disabilities so they can access services and benefits from the program.
- Partnering with OPDs focused on advocacy and disability rights is important to advance inclusion efforts at the local level.
- Implementers can invest in helping to create coalitions of local OPDs to focus on a common view and create a better understanding of disability among local authorities. Coalitions and their representatives help authorities to be more responsive to the needs of citizens with disabilities, while creating a stronger and unified OPD network.
- When implementers partner with OPDs, they can help create and promote policies and legislation that are inclusive of persons with disabilities and that meet their specific needs. These partnerships help amplify messaging to authorities.

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