

Statement of approach – Working with the disability movement through people with disabilities and their representative organisations

Purpose

This document outlines the approach to working with the disability movement through people with disabilities and their representative organisations, such as Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) taken by CBM Australia's Disability Inclusive Development (DID) Advisory team. It also outlines key principles for working with people with disabilities and DPOs and how these influence our approach at organisational, partner, community and individual levels. We recognise that DPO's do not always exist or are not always engaged in particular areas and sectors. As part of our broader commitment to disability rights, we therefore will seek to work with individual disability activists/advocates and disability self help groups (e.g., from Community Based Inclusive Development networks), as available. In addition, by making this approach explicit, we seek to empower those with whom we work to hold us accountable.

What are DPOs?

Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) are organisations made up of persons with disabilities and which exist to represent the interests of their members. Although there is no firm rule, best practice is that DPOs comprise a voting membership of people with disabilities, and a board, of which at least a majority (usually 51% or over) is made up of people with disabilities. Some DPOs represent people with all impairment types, while others may focus on a particular impairment type, gender, sectoral issue, or represent geographical areas (local, provincial, national, regional or international).

Our approach

- **We actively model inclusion in strategic ways to development actors by working with people with disabilities and DPOs.**

Working with DPOs enables us to ensure our work is in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the central principle of the disability rights movement 'nothing about us without us'.

- **We proactively seek to use our influence and opportunities to 'open up' spaces for dialogue between government, development actors and the disability movement and DPOs.**

Working in partnershipⁱ with the disability movement and DPOs improves disability inclusive development sustainability. In the longer term, investing in the capacityⁱⁱ of local actors leads to greater development effectiveness. We recognise that DPOs will continue to represent people with disabilities and continue to advocate on issues or work on implementation of activities long after our advisory work has finished.

- **When providing advice regarding disability to development partners or government, we endeavour to inform and involve relevant DPOs.** For example:
 - For desk based work, we endeavour, where feasible, to have this overseen or checked by a relevant DPO.
 - When in-country providing advice, we endeavour to inform relevant DPOs and discuss options for mutually beneficial involvement.

The role and mandate of DPOs is to represent people with disabilities and to be consulted by Governments (and other relevant stakeholders) on matters concerning them, including in national and international development.

- **We endeavour to work with DPOs and people with disabilities in a manner which represents the diversity of experiences of people with disabilities within a relevant context, ensuring a diverse range of; impairment types, gender representation, age, sexuality and ethnicity.**

- **We endeavour to discuss with DPOs how or whether they wish to be involved or not involved in our advisory work and associated development activities and the level of engagement they desire.**

Many DPOs have their own agendas, priorities and strategic plans and may not wish to be involved in activities that do not align with these. They may, however, desire complementary efforts to achieve broader goals of disability inclusive development. Some DPOs also experience overwhelming demand for their time and expectations that exceed their available resources. We take this into consideration, and aim to broker context specific engagement which creates mutual benefit for DPOs and our advisory clients/partners (and CBM).

- **We utilise mutual strengths and synergies in working with DPOs to enhance coherence and effectiveness and promote mutual learning.**

CBM has historically worked in a development programming context, so providing CRPD informed inclusion advice within programming (particularly in selected sectors) is a strength. We also have good experience in liaising, communicating and collaborating, formally and informally, with a range of development partners such as donors, INGOs and multilaterals. Likewise, we recognise that DPOs often have strength and capacity in forming representative groups, understanding and articulating disability issues and the CRPD, understanding and navigating the local social/cultural and political context, conducting disability related advocacy, including policy advocacy, and in some instances providing services and running programs with people with disabilities.

- **We professionally recognise and credit the contribution of disability advocates and DPOs in joint work including through payment of fees for service as applicable.**
- **Where DPOs have ongoing or longer term engagement with our advisory team, we seek to build a partnership approach based on mutual understanding and exchange, shared decision making, spaces to discuss strategy and mutual objectives and feedback loops on the basis that such partnerships can enhance effectiveness and influence.**
- **We prioritise and seek to be responsive to requests for developing the capacity of DPOs to better understand development processes, and to more effectively influence and advise development stakeholders.**
- **We seek to work with DPOs in building an evidence base for disability inclusive approaches and strengthening DPO capacity in research methodologies, and how to use research findings to influence policy and practice.**
- **We invest in the capacity of DPOs as advisors on disability inclusion within their local context and use our networks to strengthen the capacity of emerging DPO leaders.**
- **We commit to sharing resources that may assist DPOs with their governance and organisational development, however, the advisory team recognise that organisational development objectives are often better met by other stakeholders and including DPO-DPO learning, and core funding as a field or alliance partner.**

Implications of this approach for partners contracting CBM Australia DID Advisory Team:

The CBM Australia DID Advisory approach to working with DPOs requires the allocation of adequate time and resources (including budget) to enable joint work, capacity development, partnership and to ensure effective participation of DPOs and people with disabilities in advisory work with our partners. Sufficient lead time to coordinate with DPOs is also required. CBM in kind brings: our established contacts and DPO networks; our understanding of the DPO context, acquired through our own investments in this area and our experience in brokering effective relationships with DPOs. We firmly believe this enhances the quality and credibility of our advisory services and ultimately the quality of the disability inclusive development work of partner agencies.

ⁱ Our approach to partnerships is explained in 'CBM Australia DID Advisory Work- Partnership approach- how we work'

ⁱⁱ Our approach to capacity development is explained in 'Statement of approach – capacity development'