



Summary

CBM Australia

OPD Capacity Strengthening

FINDINGS FROM CBM AUSTRALIA'S LISTENING EXERCISE

Introduction

Across CBM Global, there is focused and active commitment to work alongside people with disabilities and their representative organisations, Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs). We have seen the commitment in CBM Country Strategic Plans to engage OPDs in all programs and projects, and the commitment to engage OPDs in our advisory and advocacy work where appropriate. There is a stronger emphasis on capacity and organisational strengthening of OPDs, and we are taking a range of different approaches to capacity strengthening. The number of OPDs taking the lead on projects has nearly doubled since 2021. Teams are conscious to be responding to the genuine needs of organisations and are aware of the risks of forcing "our agenda" for organisational strengthening onto OPDs, with a view to ensuring better alignment for NGO funding. Everyone recognises that a 'one size fits all approach' will not work.

*When we talk about
ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTHENING
What do we actually mean?*



We gathered feedback from 35 people in CBM Global Country Teams, Member Teams, and the Inclusion Advisory Group (IAG) in approaching, implementing and delivering capacity and organisational strengthening for Organisations of People with Disabilities (OPDs). This is a summary of the issues that were raised by those who are most closely connected to OPDs and have sought their feedback. From this, CBM Global is reflecting on our commitments in 'We have a key role now' made in 2021 at the Global Disability Summit.

Key Discussions and Recommendations

CBM GLOBAL'S MODALITIES FOR PROVIDING SUPPORT

Over the last 10 years, CBM Global has seen the shift from OPDs participating as beneficiaries in our programs to participating as key leaders in the development space.

Modalities by which we now support OPDs in organisational strengthening include:

- Stand-alone focused OPD capacity or organisational strengthening projects.
- Small grant funding initiatives to OPDs.
- Sub-partner engagement in mainstream projects.
- Mainstream projects with intentional OPD strengthening components.
- CBM's Inclusion Advisory Group brokering OPD engagement in other organisational programs.
- Supporting Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to form OPDs (through Community Based Inclusive Development).

Here is what we heard works best:

CBM GLOBAL'S BIG PICTURE STRATEGY

Over the last three years, we have put an increased focus on OPD organisational strengthening. But questions are being raised on **definitions, our big picture strategy, our influence, sustainability**, and how we consult with the Disability Movement on what organisational strengthening means to OPDs.

From this review, it was suggested that CBM Global needs to:

- Ensure there is a **clear understanding of the 'big picture'** of organisational strengthening and our strategy, including partnership types, and the standards and expectations we set.
- **Recognise the different types of strengthening we can provide** to OPDs, and that it does not need to focus solely on improving organisational systems.
- Consider **funding modalities and how we commit long term** to organisational strengthening. **Remuneration and reasonable accommodation have not always been approached consistently across CBM.** Clear standards are needed at the country level.

Key Learnings

DEGREES OF FLEXIBILITY IN APPROACH: STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

With significant funding going into some capacity strengthening projects, a **phased funding approach** was recommended to slowly increase funds on an annual basis, particularly for OPDs that have never managed significant funds before. A phased approach will not overwhelm OPDs.

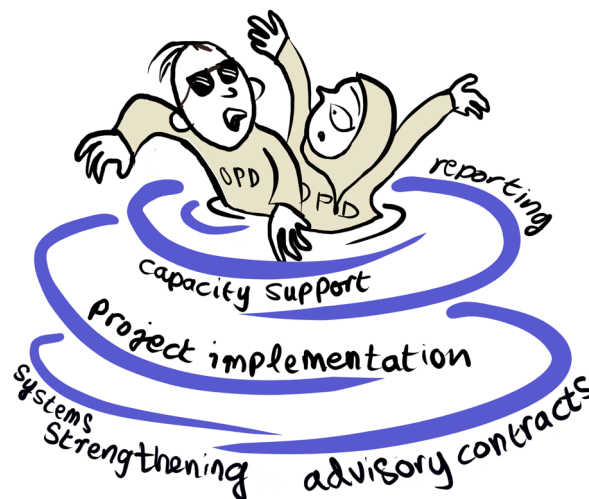


The processes and expectations that we bring to any program partner can sometimes be burdensome for smaller OPDs. We are considering which of our **compliance standards, (and in what formats) we expect OPDs to meet**, and whether they should differ from what is expected of other partners. We need to look at **how we are adapting our requirements** to allow for manageable opportunities for OPDs in development and humanitarian programming.

To support OPDs, we may need to sometimes move away from the standard processes that we expect for other partners. This may mean managing a higher level of risk.

OPDs engaging with more NGOs and donors will ultimately mean more reporting. **Reporting expectations and timelines do not always meet the pace an OPD is working at**, nor do all OPDs and their members have access to laptops, smart phones, or frequent connection to the internet. Let's be cautious with expectations.

We do need to think about **how we make the decision between continuing support for an OPD that is what we might call 'performing poorly' and ending the partnership**. How much can we adapt or deviate from the standards we expect of other NGO/Civil Society Organisation partners?



DOING NO HARM

Organisational strengthening needs to consider **CBM Global's 'do no harm' principles and whether our approach might be doing any harm**, be it directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally. A number of **risks were identified in our work if we are not intentional** and holistic in our approach to OPD organisational strengthening.

Some examples:

- **Care must be taken that we are not fostering competition in and amongst OPDs.** Providing funding support to organisations can cause conflict. We need to ensure we are aware of the politics within an OPD.
- We are making efforts to be transparent about who we choose to work with. At times our criteria for choices has been unclear. As a result, a number of CBM Global Country Teams have established advisory panels or committees consisting of members of the Disability Movement. **This has been a beneficial approach, ensuring transparency, and a way for teams to consult with the movement during project planning and implementation.** This approach has allowed for **OPDs to apply and engage fairly in CBM Global projects and funding opportunities** and means Country Teams do not get brought into the politics within movements.
- There is a high risk that **we are creating structures that benefits our work, fuels OPDs to chase funds, and detracts OPDs from their grassroots advocacy that creates change for their community.** This is why it is important that new CBM Global staff (including non-programming focused staff) are briefed on our OPD commitments, our partnership principles, and understand what these mean in practice.
- We need to be **understanding where OPDs are at.** This includes adapting our partnership assessment processes, which often "disqualify" weak OPDs from funding.



CAPACITY MINDSET AND NARRATIVE SHIFT

We need to **shift the mindset and conversation from 'OPDs lacking capacity' to recognising their strengths and the wealth of experience they bring to the table.** Ensuring that funds for core organisational running costs and reasonable accommodation are made available is one way to mitigate this.

We need to continue to support OPDs to create and develop solutions, as well as develop **opportunities to amplify the voices of OPDs and their experience**, and how they analyse the issues that affect them.

We have seen **good efforts made to support networking across the movement.** Country Teams have seen **this improves confidence and helps OPDs become more independent. OPD to OPD capacity building is seen as a sustainable way forward.**

BROKERING ENGAGEMENT

CBM Global's Inclusion Advisory Group advises and works with partners and clients to engage OPDs in projects and contracts. However, partners and clients we work with do not necessarily know or understand OPDs and how to engage them. We have a role, particularly when brokering engagement by other organisations, to ensure OPDs are treated respectfully, and that their strengths are highlighted. **We do not want to perpetuate false perceptions that all OPDs are weak organisations that lack capacity.**

We have learnt we have not always been advocates for OPDs in pushing back on donors on their behalf when there is a mismatch in expectations, for example, around reporting capacity or financial management. We also have a role in reminding funds to make budget available for covering some core costs, reasonable accommodation and accessibility adaptations.



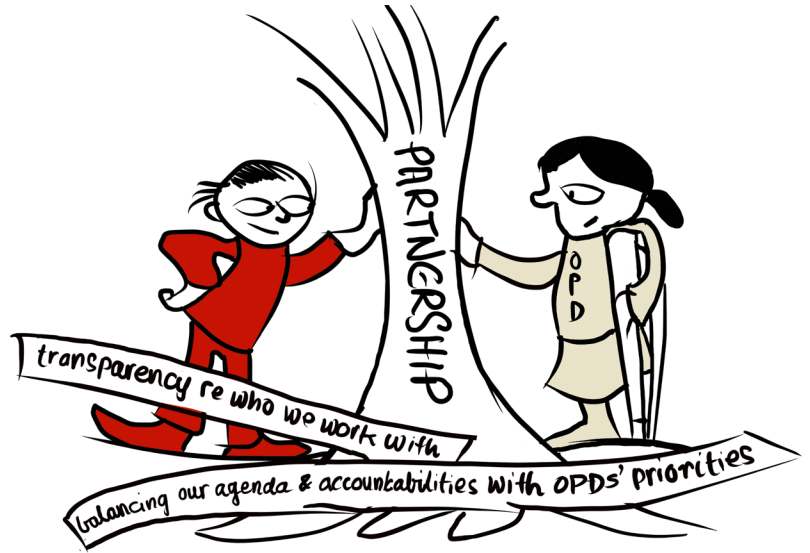
Modality	Key learning	To consider
Stand-alone focused OPD capacity/organisational strengthening projects/contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for long term engagement, and to support the OPD's journey. • Can require considerable resources (particularly time), unless through an umbrella organisation or disability movement panel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term engagement should consider a minimum of at least 2-3 years, with considerable funding required. • Requires an investment in human resources internally and within OPDs.
Small grant funding initiatives to OPDs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A useful way to engage younger OPDs who may not meet the partnership assessment, and build capacity for longer-term engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider maintaining this modality to engage a wide range of OPDs, and support an OPD's gradual growth. • Consider how to sustain momentum from small grants.
Sub-partner engagement in mainstream projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sub-partners can miss out on the benefits of being a partner, and may be consulted minimally or only slightly engaged in activities without meaningful advocacy opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how OPDs are engaged across projects and if they are well placed in the project. • Consider opportunities to enhance advocacy priorities of OPDs.
Mainstream projects with intentional OPD strengthening components	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes capacity strengthening is 'tacked' on without properly understanding the needs of an OPD. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the ways OPDs are meaningfully engaged in mainstream projects and if it meets them where they are at.
CBM brokering OPD engagement in other organisations' programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to strengthen OPD networks and engagement in programs they are interested in. • We have not always done this well and have caused conflict between OPDs and Disability Service Providers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider how we broker engagement, and manage power dynamics.
Supporting self help groups to form OPDs (through Community Based Inclusive Development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity is needed on when does a SHG become an OPD. • There is an assumed expectation and pathway from SHG to OPD, to then partner in the field. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider developing guidance and criteria on when SHGs become an OPD. • Consider providing options in our approach, such as OPD advocacy and economic empowerment opportunities.

AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIPS

There is need to recognise the **different types of influence** CBM Global can have on OPDs, through pushing our agenda and priorities, and our funding requirements. **We need to ensure we support OPDs with their own missions and find the best ways to align.** And we need to **balance our accountabilities (often around donor funding) while responding authentically to OPD priorities.**

For consideration:

- Funding being offered to OPDs is very attractive and can divert OPDs from their core work and priorities to take up agendas of other organisations. Some OPDs are now trying to keep up with the demand of requests coming from development actors, rather than their core work and priorities. **CBM Global needs to be aware of diverting OPDs away from their priorities.**
- OPDs can have specific **advocacy priorities and want to strengthen advocacy skills, but sometimes our projects push them into specific and more narrow roles.** For example, in eye health projects it was highlighted that OPDs tend to be engaged in making health facilities inclusive through doing accessibility audits, whereas these OPDs would like to be more engaged in advocacy around rights and welfare.



Going Forward

We need to continue the conversation with the OPDs we are working with and with the Disability Movement. This is only the start of the conversation. As our projects progress, we need to bring in the experiences and learnings of our OPD partners on their engagement with us, and monitor this closely.