



Summary of Findings (Plain English)

Growing Stronger Together Program

Evaluation

This document is a summary of findings from the Growing Stronger Together Phase 1 program evaluation.

You can find the full report on our website:



1. What is this report about?

This is a report about a program called Growing Stronger Together (GST).

- A program is a set of activities or services.
- These activities are planned to help people.

The Growing Stronger Together Program

Growing Stronger Together is a program for organisations of people with disabilities.

It is run by an organisation called **Pacific Disability Forum (PDF)**.

The PDF is an organisation of people with disabilities (**OPDs**) in the Pacific.

An organisation of people with disabilities is a group where people with disabilities speak up for their rights.

CBM Australia gives money to PDF to run the program.



CBM Australia is an organisation that helps people with disabilities.

This report is about an evaluation of the program

An **evaluation** looks at how well a program worked. It explains what was:

- done
- learned
- what could be done better.

A consultant paid by CBM Australia did this evaluation.

A group of people from PDF and CBM shared their ideas about how the evaluation should be done.

2. Background

The goal of Growing Stronger Together was to support OPDs to become stronger.

PDF knows a lot about helping OPDs.

They used this learning to make the program.

The program helped OPDs:

- Answer questions from donors and partners about including people with disabilities.
- Have stronger policies and systems.
 - Policies are rules about how to run an organisation.
 - Systems are ways of working in an organisation.
 - Stronger policies and systems can help OPDs get more money and have more say.
- Speak up for better laws and policies.
 - Laws and policies are rules made by governments and organisations.
 - These rules can improve the lives of people with disabilities.

3. Why is the GST program important?

The **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** is an agreement used by countries around the world. It says people with disabilities have the same rights as all people. It also says they should be part of decisions that affect their lives.

The Convention says:

- Governments and other organisations must work with OPDs.
- OPDs should help lead programs.

This means governments and other organisations will ask OPDs to give their ideas to governments and other organisations.

They will pay OPDs to work with them. But governments and other organisations think OPDs need strong policies and systems to do this work.

This can be hard for OPDs:

- They don't have many paid staff.
- Many people who work with OPDs have not been able to finish school.

4. How Growing Stronger Together works

Growing Stronger Together is:

- Designed by Pacific people.
- Led by Pacific people.

It uses a **way of working based on relationships**, including:

- Group sessions to help people learn and share ideas (in person and online).
- Helping someone learn and improve (one to one).
- Help with real tasks.

It helps OPDs improve:

- How they guide people and help them work together.
- How organisations are run and make decisions.
- How they make plans and set up ways of working.
- How they work with funders and partners.
- How they speak up for change for people with disability.

5. Who was involved?

In Phase 1 of the Growing Stronger Together Program:



- **33 OPDs** took part in self-assessments.
- This meant they answered questions about their organisation.
- OPDs came from **14 Pacific countries**.
- OPDs represented different disability groups.

In 3 years, with support from the Growing Stronger Together program:

- 17 OPDs made better plans for their organisation.
- 14 OPDs updated their organisations rules like constitutions.
- 8 OPDs made their organisation's policies better.

6. What changed in Phase 1

- Organisations became stronger and worked better.
- OPD leaders felt more confident.
 - They better understood the roles of management and the board.
- OPDs had a clearer idea of what needs to change for people with disability in their community.

- They understood the role of their OPD in making change.
- OPDs had better rules and ways of working.
 - This helped them plan activities.
 - It also helped some OPDs get funding.
- More organisations understood that OPDs speak for people with disabilities.
 - Some OPDs had a stronger voice and more say in things that affect people with disability.
- Government asked OPDs more often how to make programs better for people with disability.

The same changes happened across many OPDs. This included OPDs that work with different disability groups.

But OPD staff often change.

This can make it hard for organisations to keep the changes going.

We need to keep supporting OPDs, so the changes continue.

7. What Helped OPDs become stronger

- The program helped OPD leaders choose the most important things to improve in their organisation.
- The program was flexible.
 - This meant that GST focussed on things that were most important to each OPD.
- It used Talanoa, which is a way of sharing stories.

- This helped people talk about hard topics.
- Growing Stronger Together activities were inclusive and accessible.
 - This meant people with different disabilities could take part.

But it was not always clear how the program helped OPDs include all people with disabilities in their own work.

The program was like other work done by PDF.

But sometimes the links to other programs were not strong. This meant learning from GST about what works for OPDs was not always shared.

CBM gave flexible funding to PDF.

This meant that the program could change when new needs or important issues happened.

8. What should happen next?

GST Phase 2 should use what worked well to help OPDs become stronger.

OPDs should help plan Phase 2. The plan for GST phase 2 should:

- Show how people with disabilities lead Growing Stronger Together.
- Explain how Growing Stronger Together helps OPDs to become stronger.
- Explain how learning will be shared inside PDF.

Funding for Phase 2 should stay flexible so the program can change when new needs or issues happen.

Growing Stronger Together Phase 2 should have enough staff to reach OPDs in different Pacific Island countries.