

Good practice: working with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs)

The following points provide some practical tips for working with organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs).

- 1) **OPDs are primarily advocacy organisations, but many OPDs engage in programme work as well.** You may need to translate their advice into programmatic actions.
- 2) **OPDs should be professionally respected for their involvement.** Ensure you remunerate them for their time and expertise, as you would with any other advisor.
- 3) **Try and engage with OPDs in mutually beneficial ways.** While you are working together with an OPD, ensure the engagement is also meeting their aims. This will lead to lasting, sustainable relationships.
- 4) **OPDs can only give you the information they have:** OPDs knowledge may be insufficient to inform you on all aspects of the programme you are planning, so do involve other parties. Do not expect that an OPD, like any organization, can provide all the information needed on any programme or advocacy work. Working with multi-stakeholders remains essential to capture the full picture.
- 5) **Engaging with an OPD at a program management level will not guarantee disability inclusion ‘on the ground.’** Engaging a national-level OPD does not necessarily mean that the programme is guaranteed to be fully inclusive. Local OPDs and people with disabilities from communities need to be fully engaged and involved to complement and add to the grassroots information or involvement.
- 6) **Taking a capacity development approach to your engagement with OPDs will help to build sustainability and effectiveness beyond the program.** Work to understand the capacity-building priorities of OPD partners, and ways that these can be supported through programs or organisational engagement.
- 7) **Ensure there are clear choices for the level of involvement of OPDs (consultation only vs co-implementation etc.), and that this involvement is determined collaboratively.** Where only certain types of engagement are feasible for a particular activity, discuss this with OPD partners.
- 8) **Give the background and context and tell OPDs what you would like from them.** Ensure there are opportunities for them to shape this and to highlight their particular areas of experience and priorities.
- 9) **Seek a range of perspectives – gender, geographical location, impairment types etc.** This may involve engagement with multiple OPDs.
- 10) **Reasonable accommodation should be planned and budgeted for.** This refers to measures required to ensure the participation of individuals – for instance, transport or communication support.
- 11) **OPDs should be able to communicate honestly without fear of funding repercussions.**