

# Collaboration of Humanitarian Actors and Organisation of Persons with Disability in Fiji

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# Policy Brief: Collaboration of Humanitarian Actors in Emergencies





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## Introduction

In the context of emergencies, persons with disabilities are too often neglected in the contingency planning, assessment, design, and delivery of humanitarian relief. Emergencies such as natural disasters or conflicts can also lead to an increased number of people who experience disability due to new injuries, a lack of quality medical care, or the lack of essential services.

Ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities during emergency response must be considered a core component of principled and effective humanitarian action. It is based not only on the humanitarian principles of humanity and impartiality but also on the human rights principles of equality and non-discrimination. Deliberate action from the humanitarian community is required to ensure that the crisis-affected people who are most at risk have access to basic aid and specific services essential for their survival, protection and recovery.

The Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation was first established in the late 1970s and was originally known as the Fiji Paraplegic Committee. The movement was started because of an interest in sports. In 1984 the name changed to Fiji Disabled Peoples Association which included the cross-disability sector and was later registered and incorporated under the provisions of the Charitable Trust Act (CAP67). In 2012 the name changed to what is known today, the Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation (FDPF) and is an umbrella organisation to four major affiliates:

-  **Fiji Association for the Deaf (FAD)**
-  **Psychiatric Survivor Association**
-  **Spinal Injury Association (SIA)**
-  **United Blind Persons with Disabilities (UBP)**

Apart from this, FDPF has established and continued to support 15 community-based branches throughout Fiji which are managed and operated by persons with disabilities. The core function of the organization and affiliates and branches is to provide awareness and advocacy to and for persons with disabilities. FDPF adopts the United Nations Declaration framework and instruments. The functions and deliveries of FDPF, its affiliates and branches are focused on the Government adopting, signing and ratifying the UNCRPD and the realization of the 50 articles of the UNCRPD. After the Ratification of the Convention, FDPF along with its affiliates played a huge role in lobbying for the Disability Act which was passed on the 16th of March, 2018. It now stands as a guideline for all persons with Disabilities in Fiji.



Map of Fiji

The Fiji Association of the Deaf (FAD), empower and educate persons who are deaf to be self-determined and self-reliant. Some other services they provide are booking Interpreters for deaf persons and advocating for the implementation of the UNCRPD in terms of linguistic and deaf rights.

In addition, the Psychiatric Survivor Association (PSA) focuses on recruiting its members, accessing funding and creating links with other mental health stakeholders in Fiji.

The Spinal Injury Association (SIA) assist those with spinal injuries and other conditions with limited access to proper treatment and other services. Through their proactive approach, SIA has successfully sourced many essential assistive devices, such as multi-purpose hydraulic beds, wheelchairs, medical supplies and other assistive devices that are not readily available to persons with disabilities in Fiji.

FDPF has been very clear with partners on the principle of “Nothing about us without us”, learning from the AHP Disaster READY project. It has boosted the level of engagement of OPD with Humanitarian Actors on strengthening their work on disability inclusion. In the light of COVID-19 pandemic, Humanitarian partners were engaging FDPF Branches at the district level while responding to the needs of communities. Branches identified beneficiaries and acted as coordination focal points in the communities.

# Methodology

For the successful completion of this policy paper, the following methods were used to gain valuable information from Humanitarian Actors. Two sets of questionnaires were designed, one for the Humanitarian Actors and the other set of questionnaires for the Organisation of Persons with Disabilities(OPDs).

The questionnaire was designed on Microsoft Word and then it was verified by the Pacific Disability Forum HRDU Team. Three Pacific Island were then consulted to be part of this research and they were; Vanuatu, Samoa, and Fiji. However, only Fiji showed their full participation in the survey process.

The Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation is the main focal point in terms of engaging the Humanitarian Action as well as engagement with the OPDs for the distribution of questionnaires and completion of this survey. This includes email follow-ups and phone calls.

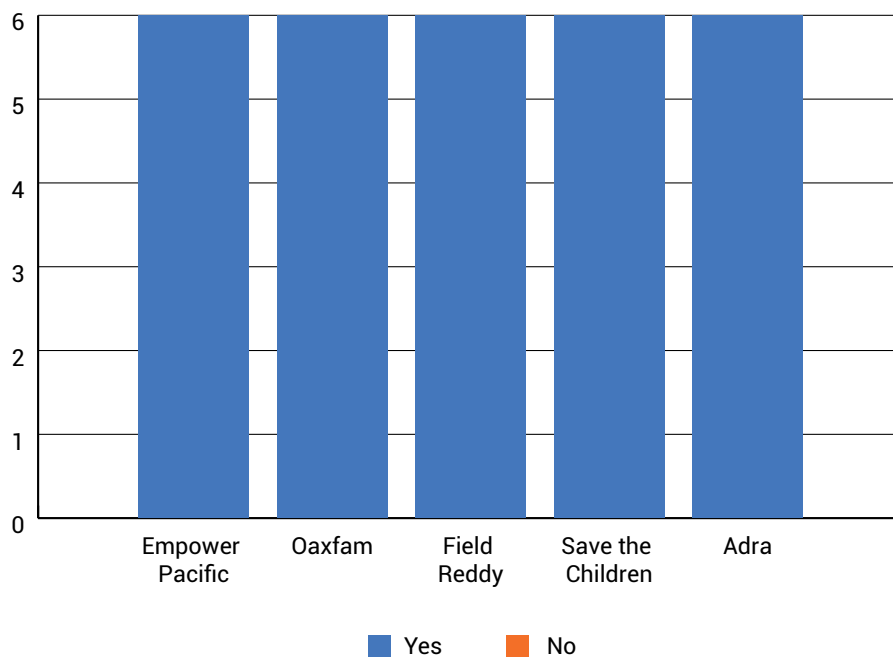
## Scope

The Fiji Disable Peoples Federation partners with a total of 12 humanitarian actors working together during a Humanitarian Emergency in Fiji. They are:

- 1. Save The Children Fiji**
- 2. Adventist Development Relief Agency Fiji (ADRA Fiji)**
- 3. Live and Learn Environment and Education**
- 4. Partners in Community Development Fiji (PCDF)**
- 5. Habitat for Humanity**
- 6. Field Ready**
- 7. Empower Pacific**
- 8. PLAN International**
- 9. Fiji Council of Social Services**
- 10. Oxfam**
- 11. Rise Beyond the Reef**
- 12. FRIEND**

From these 12, a total of five partners responded to the questionnaire regarding engagement with OPDs. They are Save the Children, Oxfam, Adra, Empower Pacific and Field Ready.

## Working relationship with OPD's?



**Table Fig 1.0** Above shows the response from the five humanitarian actors that responded they all have working relationships with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities in previous years till to date.

## Collaboration via the cluster system

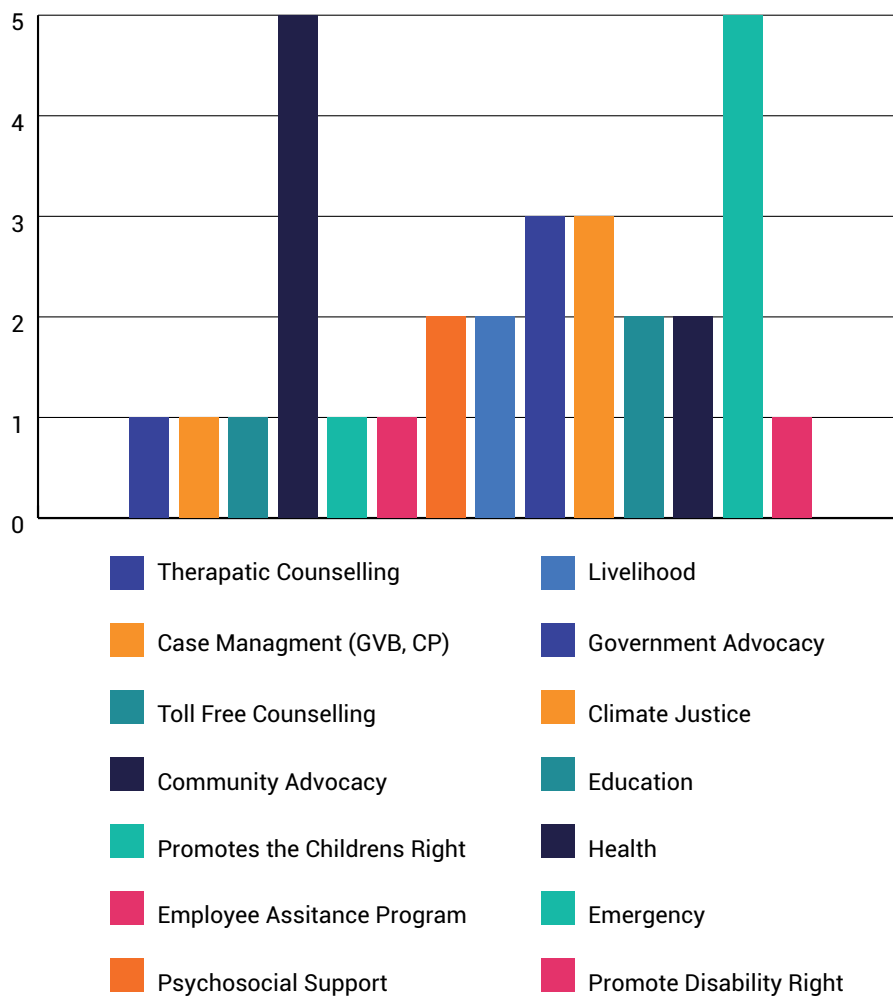
The Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation emphasized the significance of Cluster meetings as a crucial platform for organizations to share updates and reports on their community work. These gatherings also offer a chance to familiarize themselves with the initiatives undertaken by fellow partners and stakeholders. Furthermore, these meetings present an opportunity to offer recommendations that contribute to enhancing the cluster system by promoting meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities.



## What is a 'cluster'?

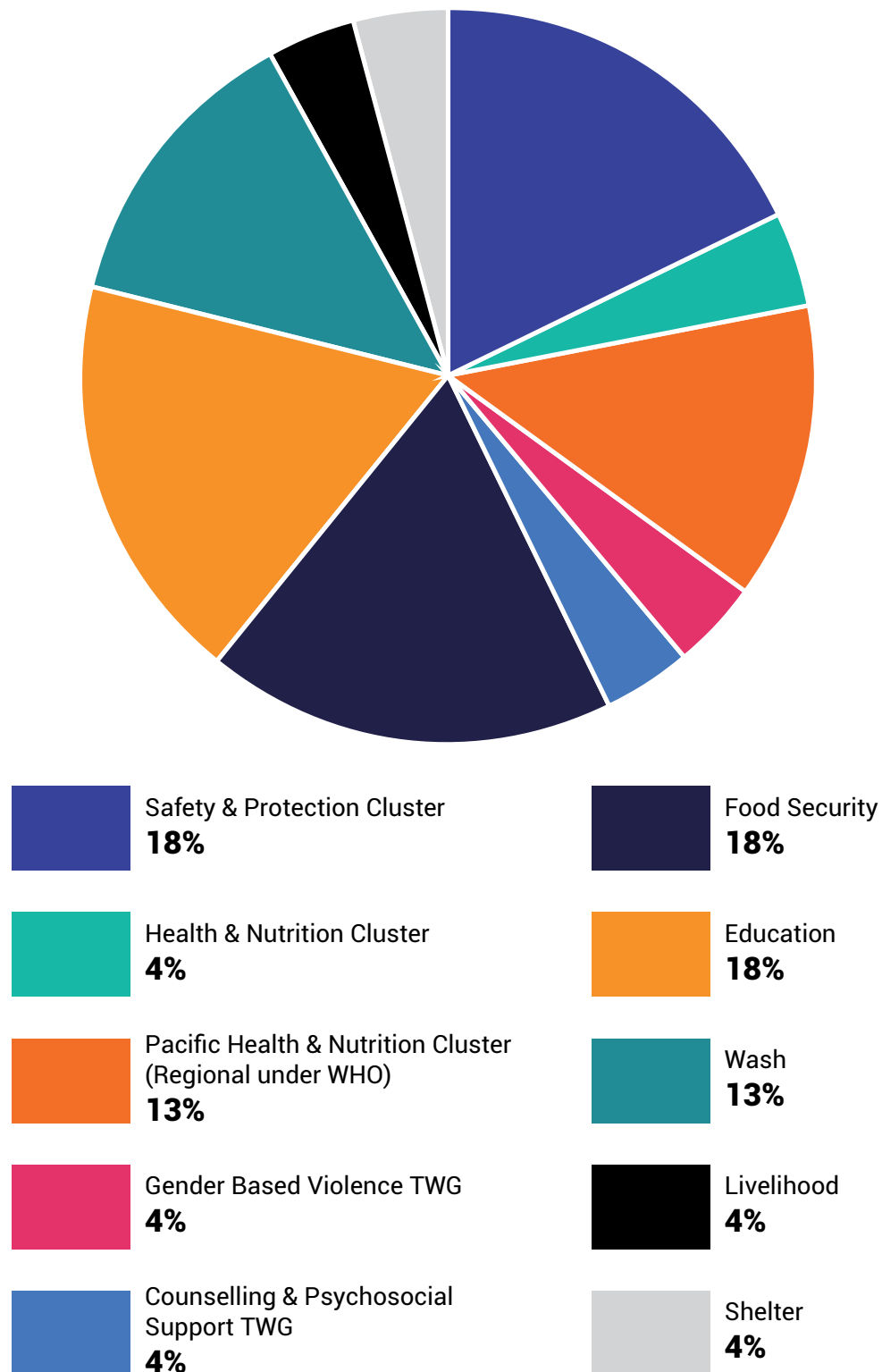
- ➔ "Cluster" is a sectoral working group that coordinates groups of humanitarian actors.
- ➔ There are currently 9 Clusters, each under the leadership of the Permanent Secretary of an appropriate Ministry.
- ➔ Each sectoral Cluster coordinates the activities of actors conducting activities in that sector.
- ➔ For inter-sectoral issues, Working Groups can be established under the Inter-Cluster. E.g., the Evacuation Centre Working Group looked at issues of health, wash, shelter and protection during TC Winston

### Humanitarian Actors Core Activites



**Table Fig 2.0** According to the table above, one of the main core activities of the five humanitarian actors is on Community Advocacy based on the nature of the organizations well as on Emergency

## Cluster Types



**Fig 3.0.** From the findings above, majority -18% of the Humanitarian Actors were part of the Safety and Protection Cluster, Education as well as on Food Security Cluster.

# Activating a cluster

Including the organizations of persons with disabilities when cluster system is activated can be a crucial step in providing aid and support for persons with disabilities.

Here are some steps to consider:

- 1. Determine the requirements:** Begin by understanding the special requirements of people with disabilities in times of emergency. Access to medical facilities, assistive products, accessible transportation, communication tools, and specialist support may be included.
- 2. Collaborate with local organizations:** Contact local OPDs in Fiji to learn about their capabilities, resources, and existing networks. Collaborate with them to create a comprehensive cluster activation plan.
- 3. Form a cluster coordination team:** Create a specialized team of specialists and stakeholders to manage the cluster. This team should include representatives from OPDs, government institutions, medical experts, and humanitarian organizations.
- 4. Conduct training and capacity building:** Plan training workshops and capacity-building programs to provide all cluster members with the skills and information they need to support the cluster. Having the required skills and expertise to assist people with disabilities in an emergency. This may include training in first aid, disability awareness, and inclusive communication strategies.
- 5. Create a communication network:** Within the cluster, establish a communication network to ensure effective coordination and information exchange among all stakeholders. Regular meetings, email updates, and the usage of internet platforms or apps can help with this.
- 6. Develop an emergency response strategy:** Create a comprehensive emergency response plan that meets the unique requirements and obstacles that people with disabilities encounter. Roles and duties, resource allocation, evacuation strategies, and processes for providing specialist help should all be outlined in this plan.
- 7. Create inclusive emergency shelters:** Collaborate with local authorities and OPDs to ensure that emergency shelters are accessible and welcoming to all people with impairments. This includes ramps, accessible restrooms, adjustable beds, and designated places for those with various disabilities.
- 8. Across clusters coordination:** Work with other clusters, such as health, shelter, and logistics, to ensure that people with disabilities' needs are included in broader disaster response activities.



**9. Regularly monitor and analyze** the cluster's actions in order to assess their performance and identify areas for improvement. This can be accomplished through feedback channels, questionnaires, and on-the-ground assessments.

Because each emergency scenario is unique, it is critical to tailor the cluster's response to the specific requirements and obstacles faced by people with disabilities in Fiji.

## **Lessons Learned from working from the collaboration between humanitarian actors and OPDs**

### **Lesson 1: Representation and Inclusion**

One of the most important lessons acquired from humanitarian actors working with people with disabilities is the necessity of inclusion and representation. It is critical that people with disabilities participate fully in decision-making processes and that their voices be heard. This can be accomplished by involving people with disabilities through their representative organizations in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of humanitarian projects.

### **Lesson 2: Adaptability and Accessibility**

Another critical lesson learned is the need for accessibility and modifications in humanitarian efforts. This includes making facilities, transportation, and infrastructure physically accessible, as well as providing accessible information and communication resources. To achieve equal participation, it is critical to recognize the needs and requirements of people with disabilities, as well as access to humanitarian aid.

### **Lesson 3: Capacity Development and Training**

Capacity building and training are critical for strengthening collaboration between humanitarian actors and OPDs. This includes educating employees and volunteers about disability rights, inclusive practices, and disability-specific issues. It is critical to strengthen humanitarian actors' capacity to engage with and support people with disabilities during emergencies.

### **Lesson 4: Intersectionality and Contextual Considerations**

Humanitarian actors and OPDs must understand and address the intersecting needs and vulnerabilities. Disability interacts with other factors such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status, all of which can affect a person's experience and access to help. Furthermore, it is critical to evaluate the specific cultural, social, and political context to generate inclusive and suitable solutions.

## Lesson 5: Collaboration and Coordination

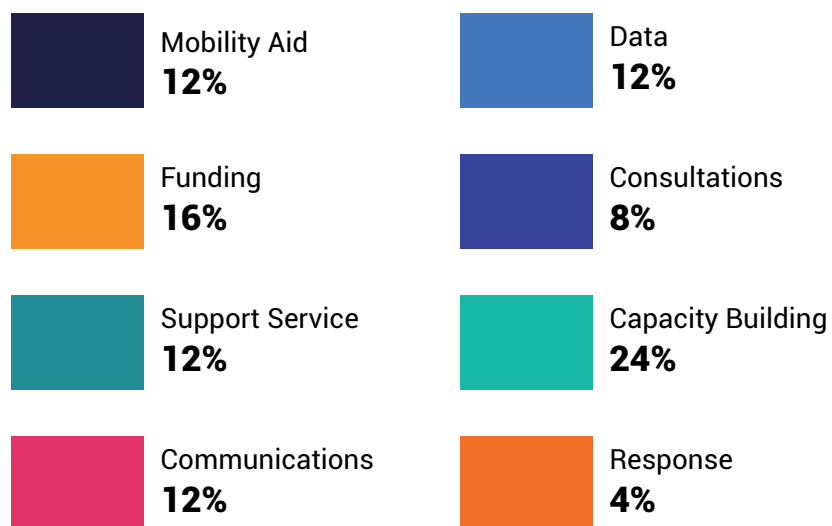
Collaboration and engagement among humanitarian actors, OPDs, and other stakeholders are essential for efficiently meeting the needs of people with disabilities. Cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, including governments, civil society organizations, and OPDs are required. This contributes to a more holistic and inclusive approach to tackling the issues that people with disabilities confront in humanitarian settings.

Overall, collaboration between humanitarian actors and organizations of people with disabilities necessitates a holistic and inclusive approach that recognizes people with disabilities' rights, needs, and capacities. The humanitarian community can better respond to unique needs by fostering inclusivity, accessibility, capacity building, intersectional concerns, and successful partnerships. In an emergency, people with disabilities have unique requirements and vulnerabilities.

### Challenges for inclusion in humanitarian response

Organization of persons with disabilities highlight different challenges for inclusion in humanitarian response. The main issues that emerge for respondents are the lack of awareness of protection needs, the lack of access to funding, the lack of coordination and information sharing among humanitarian actors, and the lack of knowledge of the vulnerability factors of persons with disabilities. Again, this highlights the crucial need to pursue efforts of awareness raising and training on disability for all humanitarian actors, so that they become better prepared to identify and understand the needs of persons with disabilities within a humanitarian crisis.

## Challenges Faced by Humanitarian Actors



**Fig 4.0.** From the findings above, Humanitarian Actors responded that lack capacity in understanding disability is one of the main challenges faced in terms of preparedness, response and recovery process in contributing towards disability inclusion during natural disaster. Fundings and Communication is the second main challenges faced by Humanitarian Actors.

# The importance of collaboration

Collaboration between humanitarian actors and OPDs is crucial when addressing the challenges faced by people with disabilities. Here are some key areas where collaboration is needed:

**1. Inclusive Planning and Programming:** Humanitarian actors and OPDs must work together to guarantee that their programs and initiatives include persons with disabilities. Incorporating disability-inclusive rules and guidelines into their planning and programming processes can support this.

**2. Capacity Building:** Efforts can be made in collaboration to strengthen the capacity of humanitarian actors and OPDs to effectively meet the special needs of individuals with disabilities. This can involve disability-inclusive approaches to training and workshops, as well as sharing best practices and lessons learned.

**3. Advocacy and Policy Development:** Advocacy requires collaboration between humanitarian actors and OPDs. Disability-inclusive policies and regulations are needed at the local, national, and international levels. They can magnify their voices and press for required changes to enhance the lives of people with disabilities by working together.

**4. Knowledge Sharing and Research:** Humanitarian actors and OPDs can work together to share information and conduct research on disability concerns. Sharing data, undertaking collaborative research initiatives, and distributing research findings can all help to deepen understanding and inform more effective solutions.

**5. Coordination of Service Delivery:** Collaboration is critical to ensuring that services and support systems for people with disabilities are coordinated and accessible. Humanitarian actors can reduce duplication of efforts, boost efficiency, and ensure that a broad range of services is accessible to fulfil the different needs of persons with disabilities by working together with OPDs.

**6. Networking and Partnerships:** Collaboration across humanitarian actors and OPDs can help to develop networks and partnerships centered on disability inclusion. These networks can serve as a forum for people with disabilities to share their experiences, pool resources, and stimulate innovation in solving the issues they encounter.

Overall, coordination across humanitarian actors and OPDs is critical to addressing the issues that individuals with disabilities experience. They may guarantee that their interventions are inclusive, coordinated, and consistent with the concepts of disability rights and empowerment by working together.

# Best practices

## Key Messages

- Coordination in crisis situations improves efficiency, effectiveness, and speed of response as well as helps avoid gaps and duplication of services.
- A coordination team should bring agencies and individuals together to work to their own strengths towards a common goal.
- In Fiji there are 9 clusters and they are co-chaired by a Government Ministry and an UN Agency.
- Each country often has its own coordination mechanism with stakeholders involved
- Stakeholders have interests and influence or power which can be broken down by identifying existing capacities; agreeing goals; sharing information, resources and responsibilities; and investing in relationships and partnerships.

## Recommendations

Collaboration between humanitarian actors and OPDs is critical to guaranteeing their inclusion and well-being. By collaborating, these actors can use their particular skills and resources to meet the needs and obstacles experienced by people with disabilities during humanitarian emergencies. Here are some examples of ways to collaborate:

**1. Partnerships and networks:** Humanitarian actors and OPDs can build disability inclusion partnerships and networks. These alliances make it easier to share knowledge, best practices, and resources. The Global Partnership for Disability and Development (GPDD), for example, brings together groups to promote disability-inclusive development on a global scale.

**2. Collaborative advocacy:** Collaborative advocacy allows actors to campaign for the rights and needs of people with disabilities in humanitarian settings. They may increase awareness, influence policies, and obtain financing for disability-inclusive initiatives by speaking with one voice. Joint advocacy efforts can help guarantee that the unique problems that people with disabilities confront are taken into account in humanitarian response strategies.

**3. Capacity building:** OPDs can pool their skills to provide capacity-building initiatives. This could include training programs, workshops, and information-sharing platforms to help humanitarian actors dealing with people with disabilities improve their skills and expertise. The quality and effectiveness of disability-inclusive humanitarian initiatives can be improved by increasing capacity.

**4. Coordination of interventions:** Collaboration enables coordinated and comprehensive approaches to disability inclusion. Humanitarian actors can collaborate with OPDs to discover gaps, eliminate redundancy, and optimize resource allocation. Coordination of interventions can guarantee that people with disabilities receive comprehensive services. Assistance in a variety of areas, including health, education, livelihoods, and social protection.

**5. Data sharing and research:** Collaboration encourages humanitarian actors and OPDs to share data and conduct research together. Stakeholders can get a better knowledge of the special needs and challenges faced by people with disabilities in humanitarian settings by sharing data and conducting joint research. This knowledge can be used to establish evidence-based programming and policies.

**6. Inclusive program design:** Collaboration can help to create disability-inclusive programs that address the particular needs and talents of people with disabilities. Humanitarian actors and OPDs can co-create interventions that are responsive, accessible, and inclusive by working together. This entails including people with disabilities and their representative organizations in the program design and decision-making processes.

Overall, cooperation in promoting the rights and well-being of people with disabilities in humanitarian circumstances requires collaboration between humanitarian actors and OPDs. These stakeholders may maximize their effect, promote inclusivity, and achieve long-term change for people with disabilities by working together.

## Conclusion

Collaboration across humanitarian actors and OPDs is critical for meeting the needs and challenges of people with disabilities. These players can pool their resources, knowledge, and networks by working together to create a more effective and inclusive response.

Collaboration allows humanitarian actors and OPDs to share information and best practices. Stakeholders can learn from one other's experiences and increase their capacity to better support people with disabilities by participating in joint trainings, workshops, and information-sharing platforms. This collaboration also helps to spread innovative techniques and strategies, which leads to better outcomes for people with disabilities.

A collaborative approach provides for a more coordinated response and eliminates the need for duplicate efforts. Humanitarian players and OPDs can ensure a smooth operation by creating communication channels and coordination structures. Cohesive and simplified help to people with disabilities. This not only leads to more effective resource use but also to more inclusively addressing the specific needs and goals of individuals.

Collaboration strengthens advocacy efforts and helps to mainstream disability inclusion in humanitarian response. Humanitarian actors and OPDs can raise their voices and advocate for the rights and needs of people with disabilities at the local, national, regional, and international levels by combining forces. This joint lobbying can assist in creating policy, obtaining funding commitments, and promoting the adoption of inclusive practices among the humanitarian community as a whole.

Collaboration develops partnerships with local organizations and communities, ensuring context-specific and long-term solutions. When humanitarian players collaborate closely with local OPDs, they can gain a deeper understanding of the unique issues that people with disabilities confront in their settings. This relationship also contributes to the development of trust, the strengthening of local capacities, and the empowerment of local groups to take the lead in the response and recovery process.

Collaboration among humanitarian actors and OPDs is critical for meeting the needs of people with disabilities. These players may establish a more inclusive and rights-based humanitarian response by pooling resources, sharing expertise, coordinating actions, and lobbying together. We can ensure that no one is left behind and that the needs and rights of people with disabilities are prioritized in all aspects of humanitarian action by working together.