

“We have a key role now”*

* Indian organisation of persons with disabilities

Lessons learned from partnerships with organisations of persons with disabilities



Summary

Partnership with organisations of persons with disabilities is at the heart of all areas of CBM Global's work



“Within our disability sector, people usually do not ask us.”

Advisory partner

CBM Global conducted a listening exercise in 2020 and 2021 across fourteen countries and 32 organisations at a time when the Federation was setting out explicit commitments towards working in partnership with and being accountable to the disability movement. The organisation therefore wanted to gather feedback from partners that are organisations of persons with disabilities on their experiences of partnership to date, as a starting point to build upon.



“Before we were scattered and now, we are united.

Together we can claim our rights, raise our voice.”

Organisation of persons with disabilities in Bangladesh

“Nothing about us without us” is an important foundation of the disability movement, and to achieve it, international organisations working on disability inclusion must engage with organisations representing persons with disabilities.

Key Findings



“CBM builds the bridges, the connection, and the link. They influenced the change in perceptions – of looking at people with disabilities as equal partners. Through this process or changing perception process, partners take this on.”

Advisory partner

role. CBM Global helps raise the profile of organisations of persons with disabilities and develops their ability to partner with governments and international organisations, bringing issues “from the community to advocacy”. The partnerships with CBM Global help other organisations and governments see that expertise of persons with disabilities needs to be valued.



What have we learned from CBM? How to ensure that those who are most marginalised in disability are not left behind. [...] They pushed back to make us look at ourselves and ask – are we inclusive?”

Organisation of persons with disabilities implementing a field programme



Building bridges

One of the most important contributions CBM Global makes to organisations of persons with disabilities is a connective and catalytic



Strengthening organisations of persons with disabilities

Many partners report that CBM Global support has helped transform their ability to represent persons with disabilities and intervene on disability-related issues. Grassroots organisations have been formed, larger federations supported to take the next steps in their work, and international partners have become more skilled. Organisations were stronger in their own structures and technical capacity on disability issues. CBM Global helps organisations access other sources of funding, and in one case a federation of organisations of persons with disabilities went on to secure fourteen times as much funding from other partners as the support it got through the CBM Global partnership.



“One of the biggest learnings for us is about things like how their systems work. We saw how CBM has a system that can manage and track staff time. We were in a situation where we couldn’t say no to anyone, there were lots of donors coming to us and we were completely overwhelmed. They have helped us to consider the strategic value of different requests and we see the way that CBM does that.”

Advisory partner



Working together as equals

With many organisations, especially more established ones, CBM Global worked in a way based on shared goals and mutual respect. A balance was maintained between providing support and acknowledging expertise and skill. CBM Global also develops through these partnerships, for example in its abilities to genuinely listen to a partner rather than coming with its own agenda.

Analysis



“As an OPD, sometimes we just have to keep quiet because there is a power dynamic. We try to manage this, give polite feedback, this is a continuous process.”

Organisation of persons with disabilities implementing a field programme

One of the most notable challenges identified in this work was where smaller organisations of persons with disabilities were engaged through partnership with an intermediary organisation, such as a national NGO. Some felt their role was reduced to “window dressing”. Much more can be done to ensure they are more authentically involved and fully benefit from these partnerships.

Partnerships also highlight the broader context of organisations of persons with disabilities, where increasing demands on their time have not been met by an increase in funding and support. In some cases, partnership with CBM Global helped upgrade their ability to secure funding, but in other cases this still remains a key challenge for sustainability.

Going forward

Based on this listening exercise CBM Global has identified measures to improve its approach to partnerships. Alongside further refinements to its partnership approach, CBM Global will:

- 1. Ensure persons with disabilities set the agenda.** Ensure that organisations of persons with disabilities actively shape and contribute to the development and monitoring of CBM Global country strategies.
- 2. Jointly identify how organisations want to grow.** Work with its partner organisations of persons with disabilities to identify organisational strengthening plans that *best suits their priorities and requirements*. This moves beyond compliance requirements associated with specific projects to an overarching focus on long term organisational sustainability and effectiveness.
- 3. Increase funding.** Increase funding to partner organisations of persons with disabilities, including budget provisions for organisational strengthening and recognition of core running costs. CBM Global will ensure a clear and mutually agreed rationale for partner engagement in all aspects of project cycle management, including clear criteria for roles of partner and sub partner.
- 4. Establish inclusive feedback mechanisms.** Co-create with its partner organisations of persons with disabilities inclusive feedback mechanisms that recognise traditional power imbalances and enables CBM Global to receive open and honest feedback.
- 5. Model accessibility.** Model accessibility in everything CBM Global does, applying its accessibility commitments across all areas of work, including in its engagement with organisations of persons with disabilities. This commitment will be pursued using AccessibilityGO! and with the World Blind Union, CBM Global's strategic partner in promoting accessibility.
- 6. Foster inclusiveness.** Promote diversity, pursuing practical strategies that strengthen the involvement of people from diverse backgrounds and impairments, including under-represented groups facing intersectional discrimination.
- 7. Advocate for organisations of persons with disabilities.** Model and promote the strategic role of organisations of persons with disabilities in all its communication and advocacy. CBM Global will advocate for flexible and longer term funding that facilitates organisational strengthening and more considered approaches to understanding risk and opportunity.
- 8. Ensure accountability for authentic partnership.** CBM Global will be accountable for the improvement commitments identified from this listening exercise, inviting feedback from partner organisations of persons with disabilities, and publishing progress reports.

CBM Global Disability Inclusion

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January 2022

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