

Tips on engaging Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in DRR activities

Key summary:

- It is important to **partner with OPDs** as they represent the needs of people with disabilities, and can offer valuable advice to make DRR efforts more inclusive.
- OPDs can help to **identify and remove barriers** that prevent people with disabilities from participating in DRR activities or from accessing early warning messages.
- Ensure OPDs are **remunerated** for their time and expertise to engage. This includes covering the costs of reasonable accommodations.
- Explore **long-term partnerships** with OPDs to allow efforts to be sustained over a period of time.
- Engage **diverse OPDs, including those representing underrepresented disability groups** (e.g., people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities, people who are d/Deaf or deaf-blind, and people with psychosocial disabilities), as well as people with disabilities who have other **intersecting marginalised identities** (considering gender, age, ethnicity, etc.).

What are OPDs?

- **Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) are organisations run by, and for, people with disabilities.** They are established to promote and pursue disability rights.
- OPDs can be local, national, regional, or international. Informal or formal.
- OPDs may represent **one** type of disability (such as a Deaf Association) or **multiple** types of disabilities.
- OPDs may represent a specific **gender** (such as women or transgender people with disabilities), a specific **ethnic identity** (such as Indigenous Peoples OPDs), or they may also represent a particular **occupation** (such as workers with disabilities).

The benefits of engaging OPDs

- **OPDs are experts in disability inclusion.** OPDs represent the needs of people with disabilities, and can offer valuable advice and supports to strengthen inclusive DRR.
- Involving OPDs brings lived experience of disability, local knowledge, and **connections to a network of people with disabilities** within a community or region.

Engaging OPDs in key DRR activities

- **OPDs can assist you to identify and remove barriers** that prevent people with disabilities from participating in various DRR activities.
- **The table below provides examples** of value that OPDs can bring in key DRR activities to make them inclusive for people with disabilities.

DRR activities	Value that OPDs can bring
Community risk assessments (CRAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify people with disabilities from the community to be involved in the CRA process. • Ensure diverse representation by involving people with different types of disabilities in the CRA process or leading a focus group discussion with people with disabilities to understand their risks. • Advise on providing reasonable accommodations and accessibility requirements to enable people with disabilities to participate in the CRA process. • Train staff and volunteers on disability inclusion and communicating with people with different types of disabilities.
Community preparedness plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share the experiences of people with disabilities in the community regarding disaster-related barriers. • Identify solutions to address barriers, such as accessible evacuation paths and ways to make evacuation shelters more accessible. • Ensure that community preparedness plans are accessible for people with disabilities. • Support people with disabilities to develop their own personal preparedness plans, based on their specific needs. • Better understand the role assistive devices can play to facilitate meaningful participation of people with disabilities in DRR. This includes creating or supporting established referral pathways with disability service providers.
Multi-hazard early warning systems (MHEWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on how to develop early warning messages in accessible formats, such as

	<p>picture-based, Braille, Easy Read, or sign language.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct trainings on accessible communication methods, and how to adapt warnings for people with different disability types. • Advise on accessible communication channels to reach people with disabilities. • Advocate to the government for inclusive and accessible MHEWS at the national level.
Early action protocols (EAPs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate early warning messages and evacuation orders to people with disabilities, based on the forecasts. • Conduct disability mapping within the community to identify the specific needs of people with disabilities, to be used in a registry or database to assist evacuation procedures. • Advise on how early action activities can be made accessible for people with disabilities to participate, such as reinforcing homes with sandbags or ropes.
Disaster management committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on accessibility requirements and communicating in accessible formats to ensure people with disabilities can participate equally. • Develop inclusive feedback mechanisms for disaster management committees. • Advocate for the meaningful engagement of people with disabilities on disaster management committees.
Disaster drills and simulations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advise on how to adapt disaster drills and simulations to remove barriers so people with disabilities can participate equally. • Train emergency responders on how to approach and assist people with disabilities during search and rescue efforts. • Support people with disabilities to participate in mock disaster drills and simulations.

Bangladesh case study

Disabled Child Foundation (DCF) Bangladesh was directly involved in a DRR project with Caritas Bangladesh and CBM Global, as an implementing OPD partner. DCF's role as an OPD was to lead community-level DiDRR activities and facilitate the meaningful and active participation of people with disabilities. DCF worked closely with Caritas Bangladesh and CBM Global to mobilise and engage people with disabilities to be not just included as beneficiaries, but also influence and lead the DRR activities themselves. DCF was involved from the very start of the project design phase, and supported the mainstream partners throughout the project lifecycle to ensure the project activities reflected the priorities, barriers, and capacities of people with disabilities.

Tips to meaningfully engage OPDs

- **Engage early:** Engage OPDs from the very beginning of your DRR project or activity. Their input can help to shape the direction of the DRR activities from the outset. It is often easier and more sustainable when you have established long-term partnerships with OPDs.
- **Meaningfully engage:** Meaningfully engaging OPDs involves going beyond consultation, but is a process where OPDs are actively involved in decision-making, and that their advice or contributions have led to direct changes in how DRR activities are conducted, to be made more inclusive and accessible.
- **Ask and provide accessibility requirements:** Ask what accessibility requirements and reasonable accommodations are needed for OPDs to participate, and ensure these are provided. Regularly check in to ensure accessibility requirements are met.
- **Offer DRR technical support:** OPDs are experts on disability inclusion, but may not have in-depth technical knowledge on DRR. Discuss with OPDs about what information and technical support they might require on DRR to ensure they can engage most effectively.
- **Provide remuneration:** Ensure OPDs are remunerated for their time and expertise to engage, just like any other partner. Recognising this upholds The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and ensures that people with disabilities can contribute to the best of their capabilities and valued for their expertise and experience.
- **Engage underrepresented groups:** Ensure OPD partnership engage people with different types of disabilities, including people with disabilities from **underrepresented disability groups**, such as people with cognitive and intellectual disabilities, people who are d/Deaf or deaf-blind, and people with psychosocial disabilities. People with disabilities can also have **other marginalised identities** in relation to their gender, age, ethnicity, and other forms of marginalised identities that might hold less power in society. These groups are also important to engage, as they have unique needs and are best positioned to articulate and advocate for themselves.

