

Operational definition of local/national OPDs for the purpose of monitoring engagement in humanitarian action

1. Background and rationale

1.1 Local actors are often the first responders in an emergency and provide an invaluable understanding of specific challenges and potential solutions; can mobilize existing networks and offer greater access to affected populations as trust within the community is more likely to be established, thereby contributing to a more effective, efficient, and sustainable humanitarian response with enhanced accountability to affected populations. **Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs)** with local or community-level reach are key actors in responding to the needs of persons with disabilities in their contexts, including through collaboration and equitable partnerships with humanitarian actors.

1.2 However, OPD engagement in humanitarian coordination mechanisms is not formalized and systematically monitored or evaluated and as a result their representation, participation, contributions, risks and challenges are often not documented. In an effort to remedy this, the IASC adopted guidance on increasing participation, representation and leadership of Local and National Actors in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, which includes indicators to track participation of local organizations, including OPDs and other diversity groups in Clusters, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs), and Intercluster Coordination Groups (ICCGs).

1.3 In order to better identify and monitor engagement of local and national OPDs in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, an operational definition is required to elaborate on what criteria should be considered for an organization to be considered a local or national OPD.

1.4 The following operational definition of local and national OPDs is based on General Comment 7 of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹, which monitors compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and was developed in consultation with members of the **Reference Group on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (DRG)**, including with OPD members.

2. Operational definition of local/national OPDs² for the purpose of monitoring engagement in humanitarian coordination mechanisms

2.1 OPDs are any organizations or associations led, directed, and governed by persons with disabilities that are entrenched, committed to, and fully respect the principles and rights enshrined in the CRPD. A clear majority of their membership should be recruited among persons with disabilities themselves.

2.2 An organization or association can refer to individuals that work together through collective action as either formal or informal, registered or unregistered, or virtual or physical entities, initiatives or networks. The diversity of organization or association may be reflected in the ways they are organized around different socio-political issues, type of impairment, personal or collective identities, location, age, among other relevant factors.

2.3 For an organization to be considered an OPD, it must demonstrate a clear majority of its membership are persons with disabilities themselves who directly and substantively influence all decisions of the organization or association across all aspects.

¹ Any interpretation or application of this operational definition shall be construed in a manner consistent with the CRPD Committee GC7.

² OPDs are distinct from organizations 'for' persons with disabilities. Disability-specific civil society and international organizations provide humanitarian services and/or might engage in advocacy on disability rights, but do not have leadership primarily made up of persons with disabilities and therefore are not viewed as OPDs.

- Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.
- Organizations involving family members or relatives of persons with disabilities—such as those with intellectual disabilities, dementia, or children with disabilities—play a crucial role in promoting their relatives’ interests and supporting their autonomy and participation. When those persons wish to be supported by their families as a collective network or organization, such organizations must be included in consultation, decision-making, and monitoring processes.
- Members must belong to or be currently residing in the country or region the organization or association is headquartered and operating within.³

2.4 OPDs must demonstrate, where governance structures are in place, that they are governed or led by persons with disabilities.⁴ This requires evidence that a clear majority of leadership positions across various decision-making levels, including in management, senior management and/or board levels are held by persons with disabilities. It is recognized that not all OPDs, particularly in emergency situations, will have a clearly defined governance structure in place, in which case the organization should still be clearly led by persons with disabilities.

2.5 An OPD must have a mandate to advance the rights of persons with disabilities and be explicitly or implicitly aligned with the principles outlined in the CRPD. A commitment to upholding the rights of persons with disabilities in all their diversity should be demonstrated in the design, implementation and monitoring of activities. These organizations or associations’ activities may be focused on self-advocacy, protection, assistance, and/or service provision to advance a rights-based and people-centered responses for persons with disabilities.

2.6 OPDs must be founded, headquartered and operating in their countries of residence, which are recipients of humanitarian aid and should not be affiliated to an International NGO. In accordance with the definition from the IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team, Localization Marker Working Group, *a local actor is not considered to be affiliated merely because it is part of a network, confederation or alliance wherein it maintains independent fundraising and governance systems.*⁵

Resources:

- [UN Disability Inclusion Strategy \(UNDIS\) - Guidance on Consulting Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [UNICEF - Tip Sheet on Engaging with organizations of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action](#)
- [UN Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNPRPD\) - Guidance note on effective and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities through their representative organizations in UNPRPD Joint Programming](#)

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³ While refugees or migrants with disabilities may not always be considered as belonging to the host country in which they are residing, organizations or associations with refugee and migrant members with disabilities will still be considered as local or national OPDs. In refugee situations, persons with disabilities may also be members of Refugee Led Organizations, which UNHCR defines as an organization or group in which persons with direct lived experience of forced displacement play a primary leadership role and whose stated objectives and activities are focused on responding to the needs of refugees and/or related communities.

⁴ Refers to persons who self-identify, in line with the CRPD, as having long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.

⁵ Definitions Paper: IASC Humanitarian Financing Task Team, Localization Marker Working Group 2018