



# INTERNATIONAL DISABILITY EQUITY AND RIGHTS STRATEGY: SUBMISSION FROM HUMANITARIAN ADVISORY GROUP

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The development of Australian Government's new International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy provides an important opportunity to advance the rights of persons with disabilities and prioritise disability equity as core issue, in particular in humanitarian action.

## About Humanitarian Advisory Group

Humanitarian Advisory Group (HAG) is an ethically driven business that combines the passion of humanitarians with the agility and innovation of entrepreneurship. For ten years we have brought fresh thinking, research and new evidence to the humanitarian sector, seeking to elevate the experience and perspectives of humanitarian actors in the Indo-Pacific region to the global level.

## Elevating evidence and experience

HAG works with operational humanitarian actors and disability-focused organisations to support greater inclusion and equity in programming. This submission builds on this work, and from evidence emerging from our recent work including collaboration with CBM and national OPDs to produce a report entitled [Organisations of Persons with Disabilities: Making a Difference in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands](#) and; with World Vision Australia, World Vision PNG, and national OPDs for [Giving Rise to Rights: Barriers & Enablers to Participation of Persons with Disability in PNG](#).

The submission below has been endorsed by the OPDs with whom we partnered in the studies: Papua New Guinea Assembly of Disabled Persons (PNGADP), Vanuatu Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association (VDPA) and People with Disabilities Solomon Islands (PWDSI).

## REPRESENTATION AND DECISION MAKING

Australia has a strong focus on disability inclusion in its aid investments.<sup>i</sup> However evidence continues to highlight that representation and engagement in decision making by Organisation of Person with Disabilities (OPDs) and people with disabilities is under-prioritised and under-invested in. There are ongoing challenges such as institutional barriers, including poor resourcing of OPDs to participate; challenges in implementing decision-making actions outlined in National Disability Inclusion Policies;<sup>ii</sup> and lack of systematic inclusion in decision making forums.<sup>iii</sup>

Australia can work with donors and partners to support the leadership and voice of OPDs, resourcing their representation and participation in key decision-making processes. This may include supporting capacity development of OPDs' staff and leaders, in order for them to build their leadership and confidence in representing their members on a diversity of issues.

**Consideration 1:** Clearly articulate how Australia's humanitarian aid will strengthen and support the representation of and engagement of people with disabilities and OPDs in decision making forums and spaces in humanitarian action.

## EQUITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

Australia has a focus on strong partnerships to deliver its aid investments. There continue to be challenges in developing effective and quality partnerships between OPDs and other humanitarian and development actors<sup>iv</sup>. Challenges including competing priorities and objectives in partnerships, requiring OPDs to choose between acting as advocates and supporting their partners' objectives in some cases. More equitable partnership practices can address attitudinal barriers and support the capacity of OPDs to participate in decision-making.

Australia should continue to promote and strengthen equitable partnerships and inclusive practices with OPDs and persons with disabilities under all DFAT's funded programs. This includes practices such as, at a minimum, ensuring the provision of reasonable accommodations to support accessibility and engagement of OPDs in partnerships and consortiums, and across all stages of programming. Ensuring flexible and multi-year funding is provided to comprehensively cover operational costs of OPDs is critical.

**Consideration 2:** Define a partnership approach with OPDs, ensuring the approach taken aligns and support OPDs' vision and primary role as an advocacy and representative bodies. Provide multi-year and flexible funding to cover and support OPDs' ensuring adequate resource to support capacity development for OPDs in long term.

## ELEVATING EVIDENCE AND IMPACT

Collecting and sharing data to support effective monitoring and reporting of outcomes for people with disabilities to drive change has been an important focus of Australia's approach.<sup>v</sup> However, there is a continuing lack of adequate information to enable understanding of impact of working with OPDs and other actors to meet needs of people with disabilities more broadly.<sup>vi</sup> Limited communication of, and transparency on progress on disability equity and rights also has flow on effects, impacting OPD members as well as persons with disabilities' understanding and desire to participate where the benefits are not visible.

Australia should continue to foster learning, sharing, and improving inclusion practices by increasing availability of disability and inclusion data, documentation on best practices and learning, and the identification of barriers and promising practices in context. This should include ensuring the participation of persons with disabilities at various stages of programs (design, implementation and M&E), as well as advocating for the implementation of national policies that reflects the rights of persons with disabilities to participate.

**Consideration 3:** Work with partners to strengthen the evidence base and improve transparency and visibility of progress and impact in working with OPDs and people with disabilities. Strengthen the coordination of data collection processes led by various actors to elevate the role of OPDs and their ability to meaningfully determine impact and gaps for people living with disabilities.

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<sup>i</sup> Australia Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. (2015). [Development for All 2015–2020: Strategy for Strengthening Disability-Inclusive Development in Australia's Aid Program](#).

<sup>ii</sup> Department for Community and Religion, Government of PNG. (2015). [PNG National Disability Policy](#).

<sup>iii</sup> World Vision, PNGADP, HAG, & Powaseu, I. (2023). [Giving Rise to Rights: Barriers & Enablers to Participation of Persons with Disabilities in PNG](#).

<sup>iv</sup> Humanitarian Advisory Group, CBM Global Inclusion Advisory Group, People with Disabilities Solomon Islands, Vanuatu Disability Promotion & Advocacy Association, & Pacific Disability Forum. (2022). [Organisations of Persons with Disabilities: Making a Difference in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands](#).

<sup>v</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Social Services. (2021). [Australia's Disability Strategy: 2021–2031](#).

<sup>vi</sup> World Vision, PNGADP, HAG, & Powaseu, I. (2023). [Giving Rise to Rights: Barriers & Enablers to Participation of Persons with Disabilities in PNG](#).