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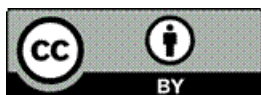
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Strengthening Capacity of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities for Sustainable Community Based Inclusive Development Programming

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ABSTRACT

In Kenya, the role of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) as major stakeholders in promoting the achievement of disability inclusion and fulfillment of the rights of persons with disabilities cannot be overemphasized, considering the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the national policy on disability inclusion of persons with disabilities, which is the recently enacted Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025. With this potential, Kenyan OPDs still encounter chronic problems affecting their effectiveness in spearheading sustainable Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) programming. These are low organizational capacity, overdependence on short term external donor funds, poor governance systems, weak representation among types of impairments, sex, and geographical location and systemic barriers like stigma, lack of resources and poor technical skills in evidence based advocacy and inclusion programming. CBID, which derives its name out of the traditional Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR), focuses on community ownership, multi-sectoral integration (community health, education, livelihoods, social protection), and involvement of the persons with disabilities to eliminate the barriers and to promote equality in rights and opportunities. It supports the two-track approach to disability inclusion: making disability considerations mainstream to all development projects in order to be accessible and non-discriminatory, as well as to act specifically towards meeting the needs of persons with disabilities, such as with enhanced OPDs. This conceptual paper contends that sustainable, rights-based CBID in Kenya should be achieved through a calculated move to shift the fragmented and project-based interventions to long-term holistic capacity building of OPDs. Among the strategies, one can highlight improving organizational governance and leadership, developing financial sustainability based on diversified mobilization of resources and proposals development, enhancing advocacy and policy influence skills in order to involve local and national duty-bearers, developing strategic partnerships involving government, civil society, and mainstream actors, and promoting community-level participation to achieve economic empowerment and attitudinal change. Through the ability of OPDs to spearhead local development planning, create evidence with the help of participatory

research and monitoring and include disability in the agenda of counties and nations, Kenya can cease being dependent on aid and start being an inclusive community. Finally, strong, independent OPDs are essential in the conversion of the policy promises, including those in the 2025 Act, into practical, owned locally-based activities to support the dignity, participation, and rights of persons with disabilities.

Keywords: OPDs Kenya; Capacity Building; CBID; Sustainability; Disability Inclusion; Twin-track approach.

INTRODUCTION

Background and Context: Defining the context of disability in Kenya, the shift towards community-based inclusive development (CBID), and the critical role of OPDs

The Kenya disability setting falls within the intricate legal and policy framework that has gradually adopted the rights approach towards inclusion. On 19 May 2008, Kenya ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and through Article 2(6) of the Constitution of Kenya, the CRPD is part of the laws of Kenya a paradigm shift of the medical model to the social model of disability (Genga, 2020). Even with this progressive legal framework, the inclusion of persons with a disability in Kenya has continued to be a significant issue, with the level of employment among persons with a disability estimated at only one percent and institutionalisation being a reality to many people especially persons with psychosocial disabilities who are isolated and segregated by both the institutions and their communities (Genga, 2020). The problem of institutionalisation has inflicted severe damage on the historical level, causing people to be unable to participate in society fully and exposing them to exploitation, violence, neglect, and abuse (Genga, 2020).

Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) is a development of previous models of community-based rehabilitation to include much more inclusive and all-encompassing strategies that focus on the inclusion and the elimination of barriers to participation, both environmental and attitudinal. The CRPD ensures that all persons with disabilities enjoy the right to live within the community and make the same type of choice as other people, and such provision is developed by article 19, the right of the persons with disabilities to live within the community, to make a choice and reside in the place of their choice, and the states are obliged to make sure that a person with disabilities could make the choice and live in the community they choose (Kamundia and Sidi,

2020). The General Comment on Article 19 mentions several fundamental aspects such as right to exercise legal capacity in making decisions on where and with whom to live, a necessity to increase the range of options to support persons with disabilities beyond the family, and a need to create individually-focused, rights-based disability-specific support services (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020). In Kenya, and Africa in general, people with disabilities have no access to various in-home, residential and other state-funded types of community-based support services, which evidences the discrepancy between the policy promises and actual life (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020). The right to receive respite care services and caregivers is expressly offered to persons who need intensive care to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of persons with disabilities in Africa, which fills a severe gap in the system of community-based support (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020).

Historically, governmental funding towards the inclusion of people with disabilities in Kenya has been comparatively small, and budgetary analysis of financial year 2016/17 and 2020/21 has prioritized the education sectors and social protection sectors, showing clear gaps in resource allocation to the community-based support systems (Development Initiatives, 2020). It has introduced the Cash Transfer for Persons with Severe Disabilities programme that had benefited about 47 200 to 51 890 households which greatly falls short of the number of persons with severe disabilities who need to be supported (Development Initiatives, 2020). The direct implication of this fiscal constraint on the right to live independently in the community is that state parties are immediately bound to come up with concrete arrangements and deploy resources towards the development of support services (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020). Three principles should also be progressive realisation, which mandates states to do as much as they can with the available resources to realise economic, social, and cultural rights fully, including those that concern community-based support (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020).

Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) organisations play a pivotal role in promoting an inclusive community-based development and keeping the duty-bearers accountable. One of the elements of due process is the involvement of the community to guarantee the consideration of the perspectives of the persons with disability in formulating policies (Ndurumo, 2020). In the past, individuals with disabilities were denied a wide level of participation in the society because of negative perceptions, ineffective laws, poor education levels, inaccessible physical conditions, and a few

support staffs like interpreters of the deaf and readers of the visually challenged (Ndurumo, 2020). Article 33(2) of the CRPD prescribes that state parties should appoint one or more independent mechanisms to facilitate, guard, and oversee implementation of the Convention, and Kenya has appointed the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights as the monitoring agency (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020). NHRI can use their mandate to raise the issue on implementation of Article 19, such as by overseeing compliance by the government with its duty to deliver community-based support services (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020). The full inclusion of OPDs in governance systems, such as being representatives on the National Council on Persons with Disabilities and county-based instruments, is necessary to bring the policy promises to life in terms of improving the quality of life of people with disabilities (Ndurumo, 2020). Besides, OPDs contribute to the reports of abuse of the right to live independently and support in deinstitutionalisation and community-related services (Genga, 2020).

The Role of OPDs as Agents of Change: Why OPDs are essential for local ownership and sustainable development

Persons with Disabilities Organisations (OPDs) play a key role as agents of change since they represent the primary ethos of disability rights movement, that is, nothing about us without us. OPDs are essential in all levels of policy formulation at the local, national, and international levels, but the decision-making processes have remained closed to them and they have not been consulted by organisations of persons with disabilities on policies that affect their daily experiences (McVeigh, MacLachlan, Ferri, and Mannan, 2021). The interactions between the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals hold opportunities of OPDs becoming more engaged in development policies and programmes, yet there is a need to break the barriers to participation of OPDs and persons with disabilities in the decision-making process (McVeigh et al., 2021). Other countries such as Kenya have shown that to be sustainable, it is crucial to have local ownership of development initiatives because people with disabilities are also more knowledgeable about the local needs and only need special assistance to interact with government regarding the issue of policy (Action Network for the Disabled, as cited in Commonwealth Foundation, 2020).

ODPs are effective change agents as demonstrated by the tangible effects of advocacy that can be used to promote sustainable development. The Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) initiative had OPDs in

Kenya collecting data about persons with disabilities and providing this evidence to decision-makers, which resulted in the acknowledgment and action to implement an existing policy to ensure that five percent of the workforce in the private and government sectors had to be persons with disabilities (Wanjeng'u, as cited in European Disability Forum, 2022). This evidence-based advocacy shows how OPDs change the anecdotal evidence into convincing policy arguments, which keep the duty-bearers to be accountable. Moreover, the coalition-building approaches of Kenyan OPDs like the Action Network for the Disabled (ANDY) have been found to be effective, both at the national and community level, linking informal groups of disabled people to the decision-making process and delivering visible results such as the successful lobbying of accessibility legislation through the county governments and a regular collaboration between disabled persons groups and government children officers to address protection cases (Commonwealth Foundation, 2020).

The development initiatives should be owned locally by OPDs so that interventions are made based on real priorities and not external agendas. This is due to the OPDs Leadership Engagement and Development (LEAD) Project implemented in collaboration with CBM Global, Hope Women with Disability (HOWID) CBO, and TINADA which has empowered OPDs to participate actively in the process of the public participation (CBM Global, 2023). Capacity building initiatives that comprise peer-to-peer learning between long-established and developing OPDs such as the distinct pilot project between People First in the United Kingdom and self-advocates in Nepal via the CBM Global Nepal Country Team exemplify how OPD strengthening has ripple effects that promote local ownership in a variety of contexts (CBM Global, 2023). By empowering OPDs to collect data generated by the citizens, being included in budgetary activities, and being involved in the processes of planning the county level, they become sustainable partners able to hold the successive governments accountable even after the particular development project is over (Development Initiatives, 2020).

Problem Statement: Limited capacity, funding, and technical expertise of local OPDs

Although Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) play crucial roles in promoting disability-inclusive development, the local OPDs in Kenya are functioning under environments that are marked with a high level of resource scarcity, institutional feeble-mindedness and low level of technical capacity which are the fundamental sources of their failure and unsustainability.

The systematic needs evaluation in 84 of the OPDs in focus group discussions and 209 OPDs in national survey found out chronic and systematic disconnects in various areas of operations (Gebbett, Bandukda, Kilimanjaro Blind Trust, De Bronac De Vazelhes, Osinya, Mahmoud, and Kalovwe, 2025). The results have shown that OPDs have to deal with such vital issues as the lack of access to assistive technologies and digital proficiency, the lack of involvement in policy-making, and the opportunity to access sustainable sources of funding to the most (Gebbett et al., 2025). Such resource limitations are enhanced by a lack of proper leadership and governance systems, access to vital information, and collaborative opportunities especially with the private sector and overall absence of channels of knowledge-sharing and advocacy coordination (Gebbett et al., 2025).

Capacity gaps that are experienced by Kenyan OPDs are not homogenous but indicate big regional variations with regard to inequality aggravation. The resources and support available to urban-based OPDs in Nairobi and Mombasa are usually more advanced than those in rural Kisumu, which demonstrates unequal distribution of resources and support throughout the regions and leaves the most marginalised organisations with the least abilities to represent their constituencies (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2025a). The OPD LEAD Project conducted by CBM Global also reported that at the start of the project, most OPDs were small groups with no effective organisation, had leadership wrangles, intermittent governance styles, and underlying issues in budgeting and financial management (CBM Global, 2025). These institutional gaps have a direct detrimental effect on the capacity of OPDs to provide effective service to persons with disabilities and to promote disability rights and access to key services (such as assistive technology) (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2025b).

The lack of expertise in technology is spread out in a variety of areas that are vital in the effectiveness of OPDs in the modern development environment. The needs assessment revealed the acute need to fill the gaps in capacity-building projects related to digital literacy, mobile-based assistive technologies, resource mobilisation and grant development, advocacy through storytelling, and leadership and governance (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2025a). In the absence of these competencies, OPDs are unable to participate in policy processes, impact county budget allocations, and hold duty-bearers responsible when it comes to disability inclusion commitments. The OPD LEAD Project experience proved that the issue of budgeting had always

been underestimated, especially in the placing expenditures on delivering inclusive support, including the provision of assistive devices and reasonable accommodation, which showed a technical knowledge gap limiting OPD involvement in development planning (CBM Global, 2025). Moreover, the evaluation identified that collaboration and networking were essential needs in all the regions, and the participants stressed that creating stronger networks and increasing the impact in such a network was necessary, although OPDs did not have platforms and technical resources to develop and maintain such collaboration arrangements (Gebbett et al., 2025).

Objectives of the Paper: To propose a conceptual framework for capacity building to achieve sustainable CBID.

This theoretical paper is a proposed action plan of enhancing the organizational capacity of the Kenyan Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in order to empower them to spearhead sustainable Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) programming. The framework is expected to make OPDs the key drivers of inclusive development by moving away short-term, donor-dependent projects to long-term and self-sufficient models to ensure that disability rights are central to local, county, and national agendas in line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the recently passed Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025 (Act No. 4 of 2025, effective 27 May 2025).

The targeted objectives are as follows:

- i. Analyze Current Capacity Landscape: To critically assess the organizational, technical, and financial capacity of OPDs in Kenya, identify the strengths (e.g., the increasing presence of the grassroots and advocacy networks) and the gaps (such as the limited governance structures, insufficient digital skills, and leadership, the inability to integrate representatives of all impairment types in a coherent way, gender, youth, and rural-urban disparities, the overreliance on sporadic donor assistance, and limited access to assistive technologies and policy procedures) that all inhibit
- ii. Propose Sustainable CBID Frameworks: To come up with a conceptual model that incorporates sustainable CBID principles in the local, regional and national development planning; that focuses on the local ownership, multi sectoral mainstreaming (health, education, livelihoods) and minimization of aid dependency by way of community owned programs and consistency with the twin-track approach of disability inclusion.

iii. Strengthen Advocacy and Rights-Based Programming: To uncover specific strategies to develop evidence-based advocacy skills in OPDs in order to affect policy-making, implementation monitoring, stigma and discrimination minimization, and rights-based programs that support the principles of CRPD and utilize the 2025 Act provisions, including the mandatory targets of accessibility and anti-discrimination requirements.

iv. Enhance Local Resource Mobilization: To strategize feasible associates that enable OPDs to gain financial self-sustainability, incorporate competencies in proposal creation, grant administration, diversification of donors, social enterprise formulations, and can reap on county-level endowments and incentives outlined in the new Act.

v. Strengthen Strategic Alliances: To chart the current and suggest novel models of collaboration between OPDs, government agencies (e.g. National Council for Persons with Disabilities), donors, civil society entities, and mainstream development participants, to promote an inclusive ecosystem by sharing of resources, joint planning and accountability systems.

vi. Bridge the Gap Between Policy and Action: To map out viable mechanisms of aligning Kenya progressive disability policies, like constitutional Article 54 commitments and the full spectrum of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, into concrete, locally-based, and inclusive activities at community level, and has OPDs take the center stage in implementation, monitoring and enforcement.

These intertwined goals are aimed to help bring systemic change to make OPDs capable of creating truly inclusive, sustainable communities in Kenya.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: CBID AND OPD ENGAGEMENT

Conceptual Framework/Theoretical Framework: Outlining theories of empowerment, social model of disability, and human rights-based approaches (CRPD alignment)

The theoretical paradigm that will inform the analysis is a combination of three related theoretical approaches that are empowerment theory, the social model of disability, and the human rights-based approach as codified in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This three part model offers holistic approach towards understanding the challenges facing

Organisations of Persons with Disability (OPDs), as well as the avenues of sustainable and locally owned development.

The theory of empowerment center around the issue of enhancing individual power, that is, self-confidence and self-determination, with the aim of empowering people, households, and communities to change their situation (Haughey, as cited in Romer & Whinnery, 2016). The theory combines the sense of control, active attitude to life and critical interpretation of the sociopolitical environment (Zimmerman and Warschausky as cited in Santos, 2008). Empowerment is a vital component of self-determination, which has some consequences to the quality of life of individuals and communities and seems to be a significant aspect that needs to be involved in reducing the impact of ableism that denies individuals with disabilities an opportunity to fully integrate into their communities (White, as cited in Santos, 2008). In Kenyan context, the empowerment theory sheds light on the processes of how OPDs can become non-passive consumers of services but active actors who can demand their rights and impact decisions that impact their lives (Muendo, 2023). This theory acknowledges the fact that empowerment occurs on various levels, including individual, organisational, and community, and needs interventions to develop self-advocacy skills, enhance organisational governance, and establish enabling environments to act in solidarity (Romer & Whinnery, 2016).

The social model of disability offers the theoretical change of the historical conceptualisations of disability as individual deficit. In the centuries, people with disabilities globally were mostly seen as charity subjects that needed medical intervention as per the medical or charity model (Oduor, 2024). Nevertheless, the CRPD was a radical change towards viewing persons with disabilities as the holders of rights according to the social model (Oduor, 2024). The social model argues that the issue of disability-related exclusion and disadvantage is not that a person cannot see, think, move, and hear as well as other people, but rather the problem is that there are things outside of a person, like inaccessible buildings or roads, discriminatory laws, and unawareness (Inclusive Public Space, 2025). It is in this way that a social model approach seeks change in these external social factors- changes that will eliminate barriers and minimise exclusion (Inclusive Public Space, 2025). In their evaluation of socio-economic effects of exclusion in Kenya, Muendo (2023) applied the social model theory and participatory theory, thus concluding that isolation in various forms

has social and economic consequences such as poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy, and that treatment of persons with disabilities can lead to a more diversified, approachable, and fair society.

The normative framework operationalising both the principles of empowerment and social model in law and legal settings is the human rights-based approach, which follows the CRPD. The CRPD is the universal law on disability rights and the reference point of norm to its practical realization, which defines several main characteristics, such as common principles and the role of states (Ferri, 2025). The CRPD-based human rights model of disability goes beyond the social model of disability by making a clear statement that disability is a human rights concern that states need to take proactive action to achieve equality and non-discrimination (Ferri, 2025). Article 1 of CRPD explains that persons with disabilities are any individuals who are physically, mentally, intellectually or sensuously impaired in the long term; and that such impairment, when combined with other barriers, may impairs the full and effective participation of the individuals in the society on an equal footing with others (Oduor, 2024). With this definition, the social model in its focus on environmental barriers is embedded in a legal human rights framework that commits states parties, such as Kenya, to act to the utmost use of their available means in progressively realising the said rights (Oduor, 2024). The CRPD system is especially applicable to the case of OPD capacity strengthening because Article 33 stipulates that states should engage persons with disabilities and their representative organisations in the process of implementation monitoring, which serves the legal purpose of OPD being involved in governance (Ferri, 2025).

The combination of the three theoretical approaches generates a sound conceptual framework to study capacity constraints in OPD in Kenya. Individual and organisational agentic is offered through empowerment theory, the social environment, attitudes and structures that OPDs attempt to break are identified through the social model, and the normative standards and state obligations are determined through the human rights approach to OPD advocacy. Combined, these theories allow assuming that individuals with disabilities are best-informed about their needs and that they must participate in the development initiatives planning and execution (Oxfam, 2025). Empowering the OPDs to demand their basic human rights and their civil and legal rights is the best support that agencies can provide (Oxfam, 2025).

Contextual Analysis of OPDs in Kenya: Analyzing the current capacity, challenges (stigma, lack of resources), and opportunities for Kenyan OPDs.

The existing capacity landscape of Organisational Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Kenya is indicative of both a great deal of achievement and unremediated structural inadequacies. A needs assessment survey of 84 OPD in focus group discussions and 209 OPD in a nationwide survey across Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu showed that OPDs can play a vital role in advocating disability rights; however, the capacity of the organizations to do so in different regions significantly differed (Gebbett, Bandukda, Kilimanjaro Blind Trust, De Bronac De Vazelhes, Osinya, Mahmoud, and Kalovwe, 2025). In Nairobi and Mombasa, the organisation of OPDs in urban areas is usually more developed than those in rural areas, which entails an unequal distribution of resources and support across geographical areas, leaving the most marginalised organisations with the least resources to represent their constituencies (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2025a). According to the OPD LEAD Project that was implemented by CBM Global, it was recorded that at the start of the project, most OPDs had no significant organisational structures, had leadership wrangles, uneven governing practices, and had fundamental issues in budgeting and financial management (Sikinyi, as cited in CBM Australia, 2025a). Nevertheless, nine of eleven OPDs to have developed running offices, become more efficient in their governance, financial responsibility, and record keeping and that with proper support, OPD capacity can be reinforced significantly (CBM Australia, 2025b).

The problems facing Kenyan OPDs are complex and in-depth. The AT2030 needs assessment has revealed several barriers of major importance such as limited access to assistive technologies and digital skills, inadequate participation in the policy-making process, and the access to sustainable sources of funding is severely restricted (Gebbett et al., 2025). The low level of leadership and governance structures, lack of access to important information, lack of collaboration opportunities especially with the private sector and an overall absence of a knowledge sharing and advocacy coordination platform increases the resource constraints (Gebbett et al., 2025). Stigma is another significant cultural challenge, and this issue can be viewed through the OPDs experience in Turkana which took part in the Persons with Disabilities Act 2025 advocacy and outlined how some communities perceived persons with disability as a bad ommen or a curse, subsequently isolating and stigmatising them (CBM Global, 2025). The ILO and partners have also pointed out that the percentage of persons with disabilities who are employed in the public sectors is at only 1.8 percent which is way below the statutory five percent meaning that there are systematic barriers in employment that OPDs have to constantly break (Mugambi, as cited in International Labour

Organization, 2025). The issue of budgeting is always underestimated especially on the expenses of offering inclusive services including assistive devices and reasonable accommodation, and it can be noted that the technical knowledge gap limits the involvement of OPD in development planning (Sikinyi, as cited in CBM Australia, 2025a).

These issues notwithstanding, the Kenyan OPDs have a lot of prospects to empower their influence and improve their effectiveness. With the introduction of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, the situation changes significantly by expressly acknowledging the status of disability as a human rights and development concern and introducing an obligatory five percent representation of persons with disabilities of the national public service, reorganizing the National Council of Persons with Disabilities, and providing an effective enforcement engine (CBM Global, 2025). The main pillars of this reform were OPDs, where organisations like Hope Women with Disability in Kisumu were involved in the county level to lobby on equitable resource distribution, and Lucy Nkatha of Kiengu Women Challenged to Challenge presented her views, which influenced provisions on water, sanitation, and hygiene to women with disabilities (CBM Global, 2025). The OPD Country Level Strategy is a co-created initiative of the AT2030 programme, which offers a practical structure in terms of strengthening advocacy ecosystems, increasing access to assistive technology, and developing organisational capacity with the help of targeted interventions (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2025b). Capacity-building on mobile-based assistive technologies, grant writing, advocacy storytelling, and using generative AI-based systems to facilitate access to information have already been provided in regional workshops in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu (Gebbett et al., 2025).

There is tangible evidence of change in Kenya spearheaded by OPD. OPDs have been able to persuade individual counties such as Kakamega and Baringo counties to allocate some budget to disability, making them now consult them on a regular basis regarding accessibility and inclusion policies (CBM Australia, 2025b). Re-Ci Malindi formed a Saving and Credit Cooperative Organisation (SACCO) with a membership of 23 OPDs and capital amounting to KES 246, 000 showing new financial sustainability strategies (CBM Australia, 2025b). The OPD LEAD Project has helped the delivery of life-changing assistive devices to 225 persons with disabilities, and two children also received corrective surgeries to attend school (CBM Australia, 2025b). Families have also been reporting less stigma and more opportunities to their children with disabilities, and

parents are now taking their children to school and engaging them in activities within the community (CBM Australia, 2025b). Kenya Disability Network (KDN), which was formed by Federation of Kenya Employers with the help of ILO, represents an exclusive platform where employers can meet to develop workplace disability inclusion, resolve the chronic skills shortage, guaranteeing easy school-to-work transitions among persons with disabilities (Achok, as cited in International Labour Organization, 2025). When strategically tapped, such opportunities will see Kenyan OPDs transitioning to becoming consultative actors to becoming real players in governance and development.

Capacity Building Pillars for Sustainable CBID: Identifying key areas: organizational leadership, resource mobilization, advocacy skills, and technical knowledge of inclusive programming

Sustainable Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID) is a strategic need to invest in Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in four related capacity pillars, which include organisational leadership, resource mobilisation, advocacy skills, and technical knowledge of inclusive programmes. These pillars are the result of effective capacity-building efforts introduced to Kenya that are based on the thorough needs assessment and offers an evidence-based approach to enhancing the efficiency of OPD.

The first pillar towards OPD sustainability is organisational leadership and governance. The needs assessment of AT2030 showed that poor leadership and governance systems considerably affect the capacity of the OPDs to support persons with disabilities and advance disability rights (Gebbett, Bandukda, Kilimanjaro Blind Trust, De Bronac De Vazelhes, Osinya, Mahmoud, and Kalovwe, 2025). Most OPDs are small organisations with weak organisational structure, and poor leadership wrangles, inconsistent governance norms, and underlying budgeting and financial management problems (CBM Australia, 2025a). The OPD LEAD Project showed that appropriate governance systems, financial accountability, and record-keeping support can support the transition of OPDs to recognised and credible organisations that can liaise with government and development partners (CBM Australia, 2025b). Nine among eleven OPDs involved in the project set up running offices, enhanced their governance structures, and enjoyed enhanced visibility within the community, county, and national levels (CBM Australia, 2025b). The OPD Capacity Building Framework established as a direct result of the AT2030 programme clearly defines

practical solutions to the application of technology to improve governance and further engage with the community, acknowledging that effective advocacy and programming are impossible without well-built organisational foundations (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2025a).

Resource mobilisation and financial sustainability deals with the systematic issue of funding that is a major factor in weakening OPD independence and continuity. The AT2030 needs assessment revealed that the access to sustainable funding sources is very limited, and the limitations of the resources have a significant effect on the problems of leadership and governance (Gebbett et al., 2025). The high dependency on donor resources makes many OPDs depend on funding sources, which is why there is a pressing need to diversify the resources mobilisation strategies (CBM Australia, 2025b). There is an internal development of innovative practices within the OPD community, like the development of a Saving and Credit Cooperative Organisation (SACCO) by Re-Ci Malindi to unite 23 OPDs and raise KES 246,000 as capital, which has shown that OPDs are capable of building their own resources by collective enterprise (CBM Australia, 2025b). Other OPDs have initiated activities that generate revenues such as poultry farming and events management, which generates sustainable sources of revenue that limit reliance on external funding sources (CBM Australia, 2025b). The focus of the capacity-building efforts needs to be thus on training in resource mobilisation, grant development, and financial management to empower OPDs to be able to access resources and make use of funding opportunities (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2025b). The workshops of the AT2030 programme have already provided training on grant writing so that OPDs can prepare competitive funding application and diversify their funding sources (Gebbett et al., 2025).

Policy involvement and advocacy skills enable OPDs to affect the decision-making and hold the duty-bearers accountable. AT2030 analysis indicated that OPDs were not sufficiently engaged in policies, even though they are especially important to represent the disability communities (Gebbett et al., 2025). The Persons with Disabilities act, 2025, is an example of the transformative power of OPD advocacy should it be supported properly. Organisations like Hope Women with Disability in Kisumu attended the county level and presented their opinions on how resources should be fairly distributed through the OPD LEAD Project, and Lucy Nkatha of Kiengu Women Challenged to Challenge submitted her view to inform what women with disabilities required in the water, sanitation and hygiene (CBM Global, 2025). In Turkana OPDs boldly tackled the

cultural barriers firmly embedded in the culture whereby individuals with disabilities are considered an omen or a curse by some societies and, to this effect, provisions in Section 11 recommend that awareness should be raised in an attempt to counter stereotypes and practices that are harmful to the disabled (CBM Global, 2025). Best advocacy capacity involves training on how to tell stories, campaigning based on evidence, and how to engage the policymakers strategically. Training on advocacy storytelling was provided through the AT2030 programme, which showed OPDs how to write powerful stories that make their priorities clear to the audience (Gebbett et al., 2025). OPDs have managed to lobby certain budgetary allocations towards disability in the counties of Kakamega and Baringo showing that effective advocacy can turn into a practical resource distribution (CBM Australia, 2025b).

ODPs are guaranteed to be meaningfully involved in development planning and service delivery due to technical knowledge of the inclusive programming and assistive technology. The proposed needs assessment revealed inadequate access to assistive technologies and digital skills as key areas of the lack of focus and a lack of knowledge on how to approach disability inclusion in development areas (Gebbett et al., 2025). Technical expertise includes the knowledge of the universal design, accessibility standards, reasonable accommodation, and the assistive technology ecosystem. In Kenya, the OPD Country Level Strategy was developed in direct collaboration with OPDs and specifically focuses on the ways in which technology would help OPDs improve governance, enhance policy advocacy, and deliver programs in a better way (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2025a). The use of mobile-based assistive technologies and the utilization of generative AI-based systems to promote access to information has empowered OPDs with effective means of simultaneous programming (Gebbett et al., 2025). Based on the OPD LEAD Project, which has provided life-changing assistive devices to 225 individuals with disabilities, it is clear that OPDs can be able to relate their constituencies with the right assistance due to technical knowledge about assistive technology systems (CBM Australia, 2025b). Moreover, knowledge about inclusive programming helps OPDs to promote the idea like sign language interpretation and accessible venues at community gatherings because their advocacy on the issue of including needs will be balanced with the practical skills of what inclusion needs (CBM Australia, 2025b).

All these four pillars are mutually reinforcing: good governance can help to manage the resources effectively; sustainable funding can help to ensure the sustainability of the advocacy; the success

of advocacy may create opportunities of inclusive programming; and technical expertise will help to make OPD advocacy more credible. The OPD Capacity Building Framework created under the AT2030 programme offers a practical framework of reinforcing these pillars, which includes the actionable means of leveraging technology to boost organisational capacity and enrich the community engagement (Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2025a). Through strategic investment in these pillars, development actors would be able to help an OPD transition to an active leader in Community-Based Inclusive Development.

Strategies for Sustainable Community-Based Inclusive Development: Proposing models for long-term impact, focusing on local ownership, community partnerships, and integration with national/county development plans

The community-based inclusive sustainable development (CBID) needs strategic models that emphasize local ownership, effective multi-stakeholder partnership, and integration with the national and county development planning frameworks. Experience in Kenya proves that with these factors being systematically dealt with, OPDs become not only consultative but also real partners in the process of governance and development.

The sustainability of local ownership is based on OPD leadership and enterprise. The experience of the OPD LEAD Project in eight counties proves that the enhanced OPD governance, financial accountability, and record-keeping help organisations take the lead in their initiatives and shape government (CBM Australia, 2025a). Nine of the eleven of the participating OPDs set up running offices and enhanced their presence at the community, county, and national levels (CBM Australia, 2025a). More importantly, the local ownership is not only limited to governance but also economic self-sustenance. Income generating activities like poultry farming and event management have been started by OPDs, and Re-Ci Malindi established a Saving and Credit Cooperative Organisation (SACCO) that brings 23 OPDs together and deposits KES 246,000 in capital (CBM Australia, 2025a). These businesses prove that OPDs are capable of producing their own resources which have eliminated reliance on external donors and continuity even after project cycles.

Multi-stakeholder collaborations and community partnerships increase the power of OPD and entrench inclusion in local systems. An example of collaborative patterns that can be used to increase fair access to opportunities is the Jumuisha project, which was carried out in partnership by NCPWD and the Consortium of Disabled Persons in Kenya (CDPOK), and CBM in the Kenyan

counties of Kakamega, Nakuru, Kilifi, and Isiolo (Kenya News Agency, 2025). The project identifies champion members through capacity building, offers internships and apprenticeship opportunities to young people with disabilities, and trains staff of the Huduma Centre on how to deliver services that are inclusive of persons with disabilities (Kenya News Agency, 2025). In the same vein, the long-term collaboration between CBM Global and the Kenya Red Cross Society illustrates how the prolonged involvement helps develop trust and facilitates systematic OPD involvement in the humanitarian responses, with governmental OPDs playing a central role in the design and decision-making when responding to the drought in Turkana, Meru, and Tharaka Nithi counties (CBM Global, 2024). Dyckson, Secretary of the Kalakol OPD confirmed, when other players come here, they do not remember those with disabilities. But with KRCS, it is different. They are never left out (CBM Global, 2024).

By being combined with the county and national development plans, it will guarantee that the issue of disability inclusion gets a lasting political and financial investment. The NCPWD Baseline Assessment on Disability Inclusion County Governments (2025) offers indispensable evidence of such an integration, stating that although only sixteen county governments have passed disability legislation and twelve county governments possess autonomous disability policies, there are promising practices: thirty-nine counties have employed persons with disabilities, and thirty-five counties have implemented economic empowerment programmes specifically targeting persons with disabilities (National Council for Persons with Disabilities, 2025). County planning is becoming more active in OPDs. ODPs were effective in Kakamega and Baringo counties, where they managed to get specific budget lines on disability, and are now consulted regularly on accessibility and inclusion issues, such as sign language interpretation and accessible venues in public events (CBM Australia, 2025a). The case study of disability programme implementation by the County Government of Kakamega alongside Cheshire Disability Services Kenya (CDSK) further illustrates the role of the structured collaboration between county governments and disability organisations in enhancing the continuous interventions in the health, education, livelihood, and social inclusion (County Government of Kakamega, 2026).

Electronic data collection and generation of evidence enhance assimilation with planning models. The digital information collection of persons with disabilities by ANDSEA-Kenya, where the questions are posed by persons with disabilities themselves, was used as evidence to give

recommendations to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) and county governments developing County Integrated Development Programmes (CIDPs) (Fingo, 2022). This data that is generated by citizens helps OPDs to argue through an evidence base that illustrates what policy pledges and realities lack. The OPD leaders of the County took part in the discussion of the County Budget Review and Outlook Paper and the Annual Development Plan, pointing out the downward trends in PWD-oriented interventions and suggesting annual budgetary allocations to disability-related activities (Ireru, 2024).

The Community-Based Rehabilitation model offers a known model of comprehensive inclusive sustainability. Cheshire Disability Services Kenya uses a holistic CBR model of health, education, livelihood, social inclusion and empowerment of clients through the Nakuru, Narok counties and Kakamega counties, providing youth with disabilities with market-based skills, social and emotional training and interventions that can overcome the stigma and discrimination (County Government of Kakamega, 2026). This multi-sectoral strategy acknowledges that sustainable inclusion involves action in many domains and is necessary at the same time to deal with individual ability and environmental barriers.

Policy and Legal Context: Analyzing the role of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, in supporting capacity strengthening

The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025 is a revolutionary legislation that basically underpins the capacity building of the Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Kenya. This is a law that will be put into effect 27 May 2025 and that replaces the obsolete 2003 framework and clearly acknowledges disability as a human rights and development issue in line with Article 54 of the Constitution of Kenya and the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (Kenya Law, 2025; CBM Global, 2025). The Act, in the first instance, gives OPDs an effective legal base on which they can shift their consultative role to a real partner in governance and development.

The most effective contribution to OPD capacity strengthening provided in the Act is structural empowerment, in the form of recognition and representation. The Act gives very important definitions under Section 2 that differentiate organisations with disabilities and organisations of persons with disabilities, which are regarded as organisations whereby the persons with disabilities are in charge and have the control of that organisation to serve and to present the interests of

persons with disabilities (Kenya Law, 2025). Not only is this difference not provided by all existing laws and policies, it has established the principle of nothing about us without us into the lawful fabric of society, and has given OPDs organized by persons with disabilities themselves preference in policy-making practices. Section 36 restructuring of the National Council on Persons with Disabilities (NCPWD) provides OPDs a seat in governance and the Council is currently required to liaise with OPDs in the execution of its mandate (Kenya Law, 2025; National Council on Persons with Disabilities, 2025). This institutional incorporation offers OPDs formal arenas to affect resource distribution, policy making and auditing systems which enhances their institutionalized location and sustainability.

Express OPD interactions require in the entirety of the Act impose binding requirements of government consultation and collaboration with OPDs. The OPDs Leadership Engagement and Development (LEAD) Project, which was used by CBM Global, showed how this legislative framework enabled OPDs to play a significant role in the process of public participation in the development of the Act (CBM Global, 2025). Kiengu Women Challenged to Challenge was led by Lucy Nkatha, and she presented her opinion concerning the needs of the women with disabilities in terms of water, sanitation and hygiene, which was mirrored in Section 10 which states that the State should take measures to ensure the full development, advancement and empowerment of women with disabilities (CBM Global, 2025). Hope Women with Disability OPD in Kisumu were involved on county level to ensure resources were distributed fairly, and their voice was heard in Section 4 that demands the national government to allocate equal resources to programmes that address persons with disabilities and ensure equity in distributing the resources (CBM Global, 2025). In Turkana, OPDs have bravely taken on the issue of entrenched cultural barriers, and they designed provisions in the Section 11 that requires awareness-raising to tackle the problem of stereotypes, prejudices, and harmful practices toward persons with disabilities (CBM Global, 2025). These illustrations show how the very process of developing the Act created OPD capacity, and the stipulations created by this law now require such participation in all policy and planning processes.

The Act provides avenues of OPD economic empowerment through resources mobilisation and financial sustainability. Article 59 gives the Cabinet Secretary the freedom to prepare guidelines to guarantee the equal right of disabled people to equal access to bank loans, mortgages and other

forms of financial credit (Kenya Law, 2025). Section 58 outlines the incentives to gain to OPDs, whereas Section 60 provides tax exemptions to employers of people with disabilities, indirectly providing OPD employment efforts. The fact that both national and county governments are obligated by the Act to provide a sufficient number of resources to disability programmes (Sections 4 and 5) opens the opportunity to find the funding of OPDs through organized collaboration with the government (Kenya Law, 2025; MNW Law, 2025). Caroline Agwanda who is a member of OPD during the advocacy process pointed out the following: The county government budget allocation cannot be considered a mere exercise it is the red blood of the implementation. Unless the resources are received by counties, it is nothing but words on paper" (CBM Global, 2025). The resource provisions of the Act therefore cover the chronic resource scarcity that has been found in needs assessments (Gebbett et al., 2025), which gives legal power to OPDs to insist on equal resource distribution.

The mandate of accessibility and reasonable accommodation enhances operational capacity of OPD by necessitating the enabling environment. The Section 30 and the Second Schedule have elaborate accessibility requirements of buildings, venues, and public facilities that make sure the OPD meetings, offices, and advocacy events can be held in accessible areas (Kenya Law, 2025). Section 26 ensures that information and communication technology services are accessible whereas section 27 obligates the financial institution to make sure that the services, equipment and platforms are accessible to persons with disabilities in forms and technologies that they can use (Kenya Law, 2025). These provisions specifically target the barriers that have been found in the AT2030 needs assessment, such as having limited access to assistive technologies and digital skills (Gebbett et al., 2025). This mandate of NCPWD working under Section 38 of giving assistive devices, appliances, and other equipment to registered people with disabilities also adds weight to the individual ability of OPD members to be involved in organisational activities (National Council for Persons with Disabilities, 2025).

KEY COMPONENTS OF OPD CAPACITY STRENGTHENING

Organizational Development and Governance: Strategic Planning, Leadership, and Management Skills for OPDs

The second pillar on which sustainable Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) are created is organisational development and governance, which would help them become serious organisations, with credibility and recognition, capable of spearheading disability-inclusive development. OPDs need to have proper governance systems to guide their representational roles but most organisations have poor institutional structures that erode their legitimacy and level of performance. Policy-heavy engagement and the ability of the OPDs to hold the duty-bearers responsible is hinged on their internal organisational capacity or the existence of clear governance systems, transparent processes of decisions, and responsible leadership (McVeigh, MacLachlan, Ferri, & Mannan, 2021). With these missing pillars, OPDs will not be able to represent their constituencies well as well as maintain advocacy efforts in the long term.

The strategic planning comes out as a very important competency that helps OPDs to clearly articulate missions, formulate realistic goals and objectives, and align their actions with development priorities. Strategic plans development necessitates organisations to examine both their internal and external surroundings by determining areas of priority and making resources available to them. It is the case that strategic planning is especially crucial in OPDs that work in resource-restricted settings because it will allow them to prioritize the scarce strengths on the activities that will produce the most effect on persons with disabilities (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). The strategic planning in the Kenyan setup should also be aligned to the county development planning cycles to ensure that the OPD priorities are incorporated in the local government budgets and programmes. This alignment demands that OPDs learn the structure and timing of county planning, such as County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs) and annual budget cycles and how to place their advocacy in strategic positions under these plans.

The leadership in OPDs should be developed through specific interventions that empower the leaders with the skills of team management, conflict management, and involvement of the stakeholders. The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, further confirms the essence of effective OPD leadership by categorising organisations of persons with disabilities and organisations led by

persons with disabilities as legal entities, giving the latter precedence over the former in processes of policy making (Oduor, 2024). This legal acknowledgment gives a new focus on the cultivation of leadership ability in the disability society. Training of the leaders should touch upon technical skills, i.e., financial management and governance, as well as soft skills, i.e., negotiation, communication, and coalition-building (Malinga and Gumbo, 2023). The potential of peer learning between established and emerging OPDs has a special prospect, with the experienced leaders being able to mentor newer organisations, and exchange their practical tips on how to move in the political and bureaucratic context.

The management skills that are associated with the financial management, record-keeping and human resource administration are also very crucial to OPD sustainability. Several OPDs are challenged by the basic management operations such as the maintenance of correct memberships, financial statements, and legal reporting. Such management shortages have a practical implication, as they restrict the access of OPDs to funding opportunities that demand strong financial systems and even fail to enable them to prove themselves accountable both to their constituencies and donors (McVeigh et al., 2021). Capacity-building programs should thus meet the requirements of these basic management competencies and on top of that, a level of strategic and advocacy competence. The development of digital technologies provide a chance to reinforce the management systems, and mobile-based applications and cloud-based platforms can allow OPDs to keep the records, monitor finances and communicate with members more effectively (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). Yet, the interventions that involve technology should be supported by training and continuous technological assistance to ensure that OPDs will be able to use such tools successfully.

Technical Expertise in Inclusion: Training on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Accessibility Standards, and Inclusive Education/Livelihoods

Technical expertise of disability inclusion is a capacity pillar necessary by Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to effectively contribute to the development planning, service provision, and policy making. Lack of comprehensive knowledge on the normative frameworks, technical standards, and industry-specific inclusion approaches denies the OPDs the opportunity to advocate the rights-based approaches or to keep the duty-bearers responsible towards their promises. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) offers the normative

framework in which all OPDs ought to learn and employ in their advocacy. The CRPD became part of the laws of Kenya through the ratification of the very document on 19 May 2008, and due to Article 2(6) of the Constitution, the CRPD has become a paradigm shift, and no longer does the medical model stand in the forefront of the disability issue, but the social one (Genga, 2020). The CRPRPD training should thus not be restricted solely to increasing awareness but rather providing practical skills of utilizing the provisions of the Convention, keeping track of compliance of states as well as preparing of shadow report to the treaty monitoring bodies.

The knowledge of the substantive articles of the CRPD helps OPDs to contextualise their advocacy to internationally recognised human rights standards. Article 19, which is the right to live alone and become a part of the community, is especially applicable to Community-Based Inclusive Development when states need to access in-home, residential, and community support services provided to persons with disabilities (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020). Article 19, the General Comment, further elaborates such core aspects as the right to exercise legal capacity when determining where and with whom one will live, the necessity to increase the options available to persons with disabilities beyond family care, and the necessity to create personalised and rights-based disability-specific support services (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020). With such insight, OPDs will be able to promote deinstitutionalisation and community options, keeping track of the government adherence to Article 19 requirements and recording the suppression of the right to live separately (Genga, 2020).

The second important technical expertise area is accessibility standards. According to the social model of disability, the issue of exclusion and disadvantage in relation to disability is not the fault of an individual but of other factors like inaccessible buildings, discriminatory legislation, and ignorance (Inclusive Public Space, 2025). OPDs should therefore know what accessibility demands in various fields, which include built environment, transportation, information and communication and services. The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, has specific accessibility characteristics accessible to OPDs in advocacy which include the necessity of accessible buildings, venues, and other related facilities (Oduor, 2024). OPDs should be trained on the technical training on how to assess accessibility compliance, advise duty-bearers on reasonable accommodation, and how to promote the principles of universal design on all new construction and development of

infrastructure. This knowledge helps OPDs to outgrow a more general call toward inclusion to more concrete, action-focused suggestions regarding what inclusion entails in the practical sense.

Inclusive education is a 3rd sphere that needs technical expertise. Article 24 of CRPD provides the right to inclusive education on all levels and states have to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left out of the general educational system, and they have the support they need to learn effectively (Muendo, 2023). Even though constitutional rights and policy pledges guarantee equal rights to education in Kenya, this remains a major barrier to education among persons with disabilities, which are part of wider trends of social and economic marginalization. Muendo (2023) used the social model theory to evaluate the socio-economic implications of exclusion in Kenya and found that managing forms of isolation has social and economic consequences (such as poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy) and inclusion of persons with disabilities may lead to a more diverse, accessible, and equitable society. OPDs experience a need to possess technical understanding of inclusive education pedagogy, reasonable accommodation in learning institutions and assistive technologies which facilitate learning. This will enable the OPDs to persuade the Ministry of Education, county governments, and individual schools to remove barriers and provide the required supports.

A fourth area of technical skills needed to make OPD successful is inclusive livelihoods and employment. Article 27 of the CRPD is the right to work and employment equal to others, and states should establish and implement a ban on discrimination, encourage the employment of people, and ensure that the workplace is reasonably accommodating (Genga, 2020). These duties are supported by the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, which implements a five percent employment quota of persons with disabilities in the public and the private sector (Oduor, 2024). To effectively promote inclusive livelihoods, OPDs must possess technical expertise on the dynamics of labour market, vocational training systems and reasonable accommodation on employment. It involves knowing how to perform accessibility inspections of workplaces, how to give advice to employers how to hire inclusively and how to help persons with disabilities navigate the employment opportunities. Kenya Disability Network, which was formed with the support of ILO via Federation of Kenya Employers shows how OPDs can use technical expertise to bring employers together in the disability inclusion of the workplace (Muendo, 2023).

Advocacy and Policy Influence: Strengthening the Ability to Influence Local Authorities and Policymakers

The most instrumental role of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) is advocacy and policy influence, which is the way by which they are able to transform the lived experiences of their constituencies into systemic change. OPDs are important in all the levels of policy making, including local, national, and international, however, the decision making processes have persistently excluded them without seeking consultations with organisations of persons with disabilities on matters that affect them in their daily lives (McVeigh, MacLachlan, Ferri, and Mannan, 2021). To build OPD advocacy capacity, it is thus necessary to take action on all of these dimensions: learning about policy processes, creating evidence-based arguments, building relationships with decision-makers, and maintaining advocacy in the long term.

Knowledge of policy environment and decision making is the clue to successful advocacy. According to the devolved form of government in Kenya, OPDs have to operate within a range of decision-making tiers; county assemblies and executive committees, and national ministries and parliamentary committees. A large number of services provided to persons with disabilities in terms of health, early childhood education, agriculture, and social protection are the responsibilities of county governments. The critical points of entry of OPD advocacy are the County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP) process, establishing five-year development priorities, and the annual budget cycle (Muendo, 2023). These processes need to be trained on the structure and when they will take place and it is in this way that the OPDs will be able to place their advocacy at the right place and put forward their inputs at the right time when they will make a difference in their decisions. The lack of involvement in policy processes was one of the critical gaps that the AT2030 needs assessment found, many OPDs are not aware of how to manage government planning cycles (Gebbett, Bandukda, Kilimanjaro Blind Trust, De Bronac De Vazelhes, Osinya, Mahmoud, and Kalovwe, 2025).

Evidence-based advocacy entails OPDs acquiring and applying data that reflects the issues to persons with disabilities in addition to the efficiency of solutions. Data generated by citizens, who are the people with disabilities themselves, have a specific potential to empower OPD advocacy initiatives since it will reflect lived experiences that could be overlooked by the official statistics in most cases. This information may be applied to prove the disparity between the policy promises

and practices, demand resource allocation, and track the government performance (McVeigh et al., 2021). The needs assessment conducted by AT2030 revealed that there was high demand in capacity-building on storytelling to persuade policymakers and the use of digital technologies to collect data because persuasive stories with credible evidence are critical to influencing policymakers (Gebbett et al., 2025). Employment statistics, education levels and service provision data allow OPDs to shift general-level demands to concrete and practical suggestions.

The third dimension advocacy capacity is relationship-building with decision-makers. The advocacy needs to be effective and in this case, the OPDs must build and develop relationships with the county executive, county assembly members, national legislators and government officials. Such relationships open avenues through which there is continuous communication, OPDs make a contribution input in policy making and are quick to respond when there is a problem. The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, forges the significance of these relations by ensuring that OPD is represented in the governance framework, in the restructured National Council of the Persons with Disabilities (Oduor, 2024). The skills that should be instilled in OPDs to ensure that the opportunities of engagement are maximised include stakeholder mapping, relationship management, and strategic communication.

Constant advocacy entails ensuring that OPDs put pressure on decision-makers over the long term, follow-up implementation and hold duty-bearers to their obligations. Another important achievement of advocacy is the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, though the implementation process will require long-term monitoring and advocacy so that the provisions are enforced, and resources are allocated (Oduor, 2024). OPDs need to come up with mechanisms of monitoring government compliance, report the violations, and mobilise their constituencies to seek accountability. OPDs require an institutional collaborator to bridge the gap of implementation, and this is where the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights, which is the CRPD monitoring mechanism, comes in (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020). Coalition-building between OPDs and civil society allies increases the advocacy effectiveness as organisations can combine resources, exchange information, and make joint demands to the decision-makers (McVeigh et al., 2021).

Financial Sustainability and Resource Mobilization: Proposal Development, Grant Management, and Diversifying Funding Sources

One of the most urgent issues that Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Kenya are experiencing is financial sustainability because, due to chronic funding problems, organisational independence, continuation, and effectiveness are undermined. The needs assessment of the AT2030 has shown that there was a severely limited access to sustainable funding sources, which acted as a significant obstacle, and the challenge of resources was worsening the issue of leadership and governance (Gebbett, Bandukda, Kilimanjaro Blind Trust, De Bronac De Vazelhes, Osinya, Mahmoud, and Kalovwe, 2025). Most OPDs cannot free themselves of donor funding, which creates the urgency to focus on diversified resource mobilisation patterns that decrease the exposure to changing donor priorities and fund cuts (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). Achieving financial sustainability necessitates OPDs to establish competencies in three areas that are more or less related, namely, proposal development and grant management, income generation and social enterprise, and government engagement to fund their activities sustainably.

Business skills such as proposal development and management of grants are considered background skills of OPDs that aim to tap into donor resources. The AT2030 needs assessment revealed the high demand regarding capacity-building in terms of grant writing, which allows OPDs to create competitive funding applications that allow them to convey their priorities to the appropriate audience (Gebbett et al., 2025). Proper development of proposals needs OPDs to have clear theories of change, create logical frameworks that have measurable indicators, realistic budgets, and organisational capacity to handle money. These competencies cannot be inherent as they have to be acquired with the help of specific training and continuous mentoring. Grant management skills cannot be ignored as they involve financial reporting, narrative reporting, adherence to donor requirements and reporting of results. This is an important capacity area because poor grant management may ruin the credibility of OPD with donors and reduce their future chances of receiving funding (Malinga and Gumbo, 2023).

The possibilities of income generated and social enterprise are a potential source of financial sustainability that will decrease reliance on outside donors. In Kenya, the creative methods of collecting their own resources have been exhibited by such initiatives as the formation of Saving and Credit Cooperative Organisation (SACCO) by Re-Ci Malindi that brought together 23 OPDs and raised KES 246,000 in capital (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). Other OPDs have initiated income generating programs such as poultry farming and event management that generate sustainable

income bases that sustain operations and mitigate the need to depend on funds shortages (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). These businesses prove that OPDs can make use of their joint force and local familiarity to create resources and at the same time offer economic chances to members. Capacity-building programs should therefore empower OPDs on the skills in business planning, financial management and enterprise development so that they can be able to recognize viable avenues of generating income and be able to manage them.

Government participation in sustainable financing means that OPDs must be knowledgeable of the budget procedures, as well as lobby to get resources to disability programmes allocated. The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, demands national and county governments to devote sufficient resources to disability programmes, which offer a legal basis of the advocacy of OPD (Oduor, 2024). Section 4 mandates the national government to ensure that it allocates sufficient resources to programmes that aim at addressing persons with disabilities and that there is equity in the allocation of resources, whereas Section 5 mandates the county governments to do the same (Oduor, 2024). Their skills should include budget analysis and this will allow OPDs monitor which amounts are allocated to disability programmes, detect the gaps and lobby the increased amount of funds. The disability inclusion in county governments evaluation led by the National Council of Persons with Disabilities is also the key piece of evidence to support this advocacy and disclose a high level of disparity among counties regarding legislative frameworks, budgetary allocations, and programme execution (Oduor, 2024). This data can be used to compare the counties of the OPDs to their peers and persuade them to perform better.

All the resource mobilisation efforts are based on financial management and accountability systems because donors and government partners want to be assured that the funds will be used in a responsible manner. Most OPDs have challenges in the basic financial management operations, such as record keeping, financial statements, and legal reporting (McVeigh, MacLachlan, Ferri, and Mannan, 2021). The experience of OPD LEAD Project showed that the budgeting issues were always underestimated, and especially, the costs of offering inclusive support like assistive devices and reasonable accommodation (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). Capacity-building should then take these underlying financial management competencies such as budget preparation, financial records maintenance, internal controls as well as audit preparedness. The inclusion of digital financial

management tools is associated with the prospects to reinforce systems, yet technology should be supported by training and continuous assistance to make the use successful.

Networking and Partnerships: Building Alliances with Local Government, CSOs, and Mainstream Development Actors

The networking and partnerships are key measures to make OPD more effective and to integrate the concept of disability inclusion into the mainstream developmental systems. A systemic change cannot be realised by an individual organisation; sustainable inclusion takes concerted efforts of different players, which involve government, civil society, private sector and development partners. The connection between the Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities implies that OPDs and persons with disabilities are likely to be even more involved in development policies and programmes, but it is critical to deconstruct the barriers to participation of OPDs and persons with disabilities in decision-making (McVeigh, MacLachlan, Ferri, and Mannan, 2021). Effective partnerships necessitate the OPDs to competency-build in relation management, coalition-building, collaborative advocacy and stakeholder mapping.

The collaborations with local government are especially important in the devolved system of Kenya, when counties have prominent roles of services which concern people with disabilities. Examination of the disability inclusion in the county governments by National Council on Persons with Disabilities base assessment clearly indicates a chance and a challenge (Oduor, 2024). Although sixteen county governments have already passed disability legislation and twelve have their own disability policy, there is positive practice already: thirty-nine counties have hired persons with disabilities, and thirty-five have their own economic empowerment programmes targeting persons with disabilities (Oduor, 2024). Those OPDs that have developed regular consultation avenues with the county governments are in a better position of influencing budgetary allocations, programme design and service delivery. Models of OPDs in Kakamega and Baringo counties have been effective in influencing certain budget lines on disability and currently they are consulted regularly on the accessibility and inclusion measures (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). These relationships ask of OPDs to learn about county planning cycles, establish relationships with the pertinent officials, and prove their worth as sources of expertise on including people with disabilities.

Collaborations with civil society organisations (CSOs) can help OPDs to tap into technical knowledge, pool resources and increase advocacy messages. Mainstream CSOs in health, education, livelihoods and governance, usually have organisational strengths and resources that the OPDs do not have whereas the OPDs have lived experience which enhances CSO programming. The Jumuisha project is an example of collaborative models that can be implemented to support equitable access to opportunities to persons with disabilities, as the project was implemented by NCPWD in partnership with the Consortium of Disabled Persons in Kenya (CDPOK) in Kakamega, Nakuru, Kilifi, and Isiolo counties (Malinga and Gumbo, 2023). The project engages champion members through capacity building and provides internships and apprenticeship to disabled youth as well as training service providers on delivering services to the disabled (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). In these partnerships it is necessary to have explicit agreements regarding the roles and responsibilities and the authority to make decisions and to ensure that OPDs remain autonomous and retains its representational integrity and makes use of the partnership resources.

Associations with mainstream development players such as international NGOs and the United Nations agencies avail OPDs access to technical resources, funding sources and advocacy opportunities. The AT2030 programme, which was done by the Global Disability Innovation Hub in conjunction with Kenyan OPDs, shows how research and capacity-building projects can enhance the effectiveness of OPDs (Gebbett, Bandukda, Kilimanjaro Blind Trust, De Bronac De Vazelhes, Osinya, Mahmoud, & Kalovwe, 2025). Co-developed with OPDs as part of the AT2030 programme, the OPD Country Level Strategy on Kenya gives a practical framework of strengthening the advocacy ecosystem, increasing access to assistive technology, and organisational capacity-building through specific interventions (Gebbett et al., 2025). These alliances should be based on the principles of meaningful involvement in the sense that OPDs should participate in the whole project design and implementation as well as evaluation and not just consulted as beneficiaries.

Collective impact is enhanced through coalition-building among OPDs themselves, and provides single-voiced advocacy messages to decision-makers. Kenya Disability Network (KDN) is formed on the initiative of Federation of Kenya Employers with the help of ILO, and it is a specific organization aimed at creating a specific platform to unite employers to promote disability

inclusion in the workplace, yet such a coalition must be established in other industries (Muendo, 2023). Coalitions also allow OPDs to combine resources, exchange information, organize advocacy tactics, and make joint demands that are less likely to be overlooked by decision-makers. Knowledge-sharing and advocacy coordination platforms emerged as a gap in the needs assessment as AT2030 has limited potential to collaborate and had no platforms to achieve this (Gebbett et al., 2025). To fill these gaps, it is necessary to invest in convening mechanisms, communication platforms and collaborative governance structures that help OPDs to collaborate with each other without losing their own identity and independence.

PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE CBID PROGRAMMING

Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and OPDs: Facilitating Leadership Training for OPD Members and Self-Help Groups

The principle of empowerment of persons with disabilities and representative organisations is the cornerstone of Community-Based Inclusive Development because persons with lived experience of disability should take the lead in advocacy and stimulate the actions of decision-making processes. The theory of empowerment is devoted to the increase of personal power, i.e. self-confidence, self-determination in order to empower individuals, families and communities to ameliorate their condition (Romer & Whinnery, 2016). The theory combines control perceptions, proactive attitude towards life and critical comprehension of the sociopolitical environment and is vital to the issue concerning how individuals with disabilities can shift to agents of change and not passive consumers of the services (Santos, 2008).

ODP members and the Self-Help Groups (SHGs) receive leadership training to develop the individual and collective capacity required to be actively engaged in governance and development. The OPD LEAD Project used by CBM Global in eight counties in Kenya showed that with a specific focus on leadership development, OPDs can shift their status to a credible organisation that can communicate with the government and development partners (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). Nine of eleven OPDs involved in the training developed running offices, became more visible, and engaged their communities, counties, and states through the training on governance, financial management, and advocacy (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). This change can be used to demonstrate how empowerment works on various levels, including individual, organisational, and community,

where the required interventions involve the development of self-advocacy capabilities, enhancement of organisational governance, and the provision of enabling environments to facilitate collective action (Romer and Whinnery, 2016).

The Self-Help Groups have a very significant role to play in the grassroots level of empowerment and in this regard they provide avenues where people with disabilities can establish mutual support groups, share experiences and come up with strategies of service advocacy. These organizations tend to act as gateways to those individuals who might not necessarily enter into formal OPD arrangements and also gain confidence and leadership which can be progressed to wider advocacy positions. As a key independent living facet, empowerment has implications on both the quality of life of an individual and the community, and it seems to be a pertinent aspect of reducing ableism that denies people with disabilities full integration in their communities (Santos, 2008). The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, strengthens this agenda of empowerment by making a legal distinction between organisations representing persons with disabilities and organisations of persons with disabilities, where organisations dominated and controlled by persons with disabilities themselves have an advantage in policy processes (Oduor, 2024).

Community Ownership and Capacity Building: Shifting from Donor-Driven to Community-Driven Models

Sustainable Community-Based Inclusive Development necessitates the fundamental shift between the donor-oriented intervention to the community-oriented models that would develop the local capacity and secure the long-term ownership. The best support that the agencies can provide is to empower Organisations of Persons with Disabilities to enjoy their basic human rights and civil and legal rights, and not to impose externally devised programmes that might not align with the local priorities (Oxfam, 2025). Such transition demands training of local volunteers, community leaders and stakeholders in order to sustain the initiatives even outside of project cycles to bring about disability inclusion in the existing community structures and relationships.

Community ownership means the interventions have to be responsive towards genuine priorities and not foreign agendas. Individuals with disabilities have in-depth knowledge of local needs, such as which obstacles in their particular situations can be most critical, as well as what remedies can be most likely to be welcomed and maintained by their communities (Malinga and Gumbo, 2023). The multiplier effect of developing capacity building of the community leaders and volunteers is

that trained people can still contribute to the disability inclusion processes even after the development projects are over. The experience of the OPD LEAD Project confirms that the reliance on donor funding is not a problem, but the development of a more robust governance, the ability to generate income, and public awareness of the community opens the doors to sustainability (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023).

Attitudinal barriers that maintain exclusion are overcome by training the local stakeholders. In Turkana, OPDs have taken a bold step in fundamental cultural values that persons with disabilities are perceived by some communities as a bad omen or a curse and has been marginalized and stigmatised (CBM Global, 2025). It is found that sensitisation by the community through the aid of the same local leaders tend to be effective than the outside sensitization in modification of these deeply etched attitudes. The Jumuisha project that was enforced in counties of Kakamega, Nakuru, Kilifi, and Isiolo shows that multi-stakeholder collaboration can increase equitable access to opportunity by persons with disabilities through capacity building of service providers and community members, as well as OPDs themselves (Malinga and Gumbo, 2023).

Mainstreaming and System Integration: Embedding Disability-Specific Services within Existing Public Systems

The inclusion of disability in the current local, regional and national systems in the community makes it a long term sustainable strategy because the project will not have parallel project implementation, which will fail once the funding is withdrawn by the donors. Article 19 of the Conventions on the rights of people with disabilities demands that states must offer in-home, residential, and community-based support services to individuals with disability and these requirements are integrated into the larger systems of health, social protection, and education (Kamundia and Sidi, 2020). History In the African region, and Kenya alone, people with disabilities have traditionally been denied access to various community support services funded by the state, which demonstrates the lack of correspondence between the policy promises and realities (Kamundia & Sidi, 2020).

System integration involves the OPDs to approach government planning and budgeting processes strategically so that the inclusion of disability is projected in mainstream programmes. As the baseline analysis of disability inclusion in county governments by the National Council of Persons

with Disabilities shows, despite the fact that sixteen county governments have already established disability legislation and two dozen counties have separate disability policies, there are some positive results: thirty-nine counties hired persons with disabilities and thirty-five counties have established economic empowerment programmes specifically targeting persons with disabilities (Oduor, 2024). OPDs which have developed routine consultation relationships with the county governments are at a better position to affect budget allocations, programme design and service delivery. The OPDs in Kakamega and Baringo counties have been effective in lobbying certain the disability budget lines and are now being consulted on a regular basis regarding the accessibility and inclusion actions (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023).

Rights-Based Advocacy and Sensitization: Engaging Community Leaders and Duty-Bearers

Rights advocacy and sensitisation involve community leaders and duty-bearers in efforts to transform attitudes and stigma and ensure the enforcement of the rights of people with disabilities as laid down by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The CRPD was a historic breakthrough in the thinking of persons with disabilities as the leaders of rights under the social model instead of historical ways of thinking of disability as personal shortcoming that requires charity or medical treatment (Oduor, 2024). This normative framework needs to be translated into efficient advocacy to bring about the changes in the treatment of persons with disabilities in the communities and the way in which duty-bearers distribute resources and plan services.

A community-based involvement of leaders is critical to combating the culture of stigma that breeds exclusion. Section 11 of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, contains clauses that demand awareness-raising as a way of fighting stereotypes, prejudices and harmful practices concerning persons with disabilities (CBM Global, 2025). They were influenced by the OPD advocacy at the time of the development of the Act, where Turkana OPDs were able to speak out and share their experiences about cultural beliefs portraying persons with disabilities as curses or omens in certain cultures (CBM Global, 2025). When community leaders, religious leaders, elders, and local administrators are used as champions of the disability rights it would be possible to influence the change of attitudes faster than when using external messaging.

Involving the duty-bearers on county and national levels makes the rights-based commitments transferred into resource allocation and programme implementation. The Persons with Disabilities

Act, 2025, obligates national and county governments to distribute sufficient resources to the disability programmes, which give OPD advocacy a legal basis (Oduor, 2024). Section 4 holds national government responsible to deploy sufficient resources to programmes aimed at persons with disabilities and distribute them fairly, whereas Section 5 holds county governments responsible to do the same (Oduor, 2024). OPDs should also be furnished with budget analytical skills to monitor allocations to disability programmes, gaps, and appeal to have more funds based on their rights-based arguments (McVeigh, MacLachlan, Ferri, and Mannan, 2021).

Participatory Action Research and Mapping: Local Finding out Local Needs and Barriers.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) and community mapping can be described as effective approaches to the determination of local needs and barriers using a true bottom-up methodology. PAR is based on the philosophy that people with disabilities are in a better position to understand their needs and they ought to be included in the process of planning and executing development programs (Oxfam, 2025). Compared to a traditional research method described by external experts defining the problems and getting data, PAR makes persons with disabilities the co-researchers who are the ones who formulate research questions, data collection, analysis, and their recommendations are made on the basis of the experience of living.

Community mapping assists the OPDs and Self-Help Groups to record the physical, attitudinal and institutional barriers which persons with disabilities experience in their everyday life. It may involve mapping the buildings and open areas that are not accessible, finding gaps in service delivery, recording discrimination in job and education, and capturing good cases of inclusion that can be used as an example of inclusion to be imitated (Gebbett et al., 2025). Participatory methodologies were applied to the AT2030 needs assessment to make sure that the OPDs perspectives influenced the research design and findings that led to the formulation of recommendations that were reflective of the genuine community priorities (Gebbett et al., 2025).

Participatory research conducted by citizens has specific strengths in advocacy, where it provides an experience of citizen lives that government statistics can be missing. This information could be utilized to prove the discrepancies between policy promises and practice, promote resource distribution, and track the government performance (McVeigh et al., 2021). The evidence presented in recommendations made to the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development and

county governments working on County Integrated Development Programmes was based on the digital data collected by ANDSEA-Kenya among persons with disabilities in which questions were formulated by persons with disabilities (Malinga and Gumbo, 2023). With people with disabilities having control over the data they create and own, it ensures that they are the ones who are telling the stories about their lives and defying the imaginations and misconceptions of the challenges that marginalize them.

Data Collection and Monitoring: Generating Evidence for Policy Change

The monitoring and data collection systems allow Organisations of Persons with Disability to produce the credible evidence that can bring about policy change as well as hold the duty-bearers to their obligations. The interplay between the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Sustainable Development Goals offers an opportunity to the OPDs to be more involved in development policies and programmes but to effectively take part in it, they should provide evidence that shows the problems that persons with disabilities face and the efficacy of the suggested solutions (McVeigh et al., 2021).

Evidence-based advocacy means that OPDs have to collect and use information that covers various spheres such as employment rates, education access, the use of health services, coverage of social security. An example of such evidence-making is the baseline evaluation of the state of disability inclusion in county governments conducted by the National Council for Persons with Disabilities which demonstrated that a lot of diversity exists in the legislative frameworks, budgetary allocations, and the implementation of the programmes across counties (Oduor, 2024). Such data can be used by OPDs to compare their counties with others, and promote better performance using comparative evidence.

The process of government adhering to the law is to be monitored by means of systematic data gathering over a period of time. Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, defines a binding requirement such as five percent employment quota of persons with disabilities in the government and the commercial sector (Oduor, 2024). OPDs also need to come up with mechanisms of monitoring adherence to these provisions, record their progress and breach, and use the same to lobby enforcement. Section 21(3) obligates employers to provide employers with yearly reports on the employment of PWDs, offering OPDs with data sources, which he or she can access and analyse (Oduor, 2024). The AT2030 needs analysis showed that there is a large need of capacity-building

in data collection and analysis, as it is necessary to inform policymakers with compelling stories supported by sound evidence (Gebbett et al., 2025).

CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

Resource Constraints and Funding Dependency: Overcoming the Limitations of Sporadic Donor Funding

Financing dependency and lack of resources is also existential problems of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Kenya, which negatively affects their independence, sustainability and capacity to serve their constituencies effectively. The shortcomings of sporadic donor funding are especially acute in low-income environments where OPDs have to struggle over the available resources and are still being exposed to changing donor priorities and funding trends. A study on self-help groups caring about children with disabilities in Kilifi County reported that out of the twenty groups that were formed in a ten months set-up period, one-third broke out because of disagreements, corruption, and inhospitable climate conditions, which indicated the vulnerability of community-based organisations in resource-starved settings (Bunning, Gona, Newton, Andrews, Blazey, Ruddock, Henery, and Hartley, 2020). Such a high rate of attrition proves that in the absence of sustainable resource inflows and well-developed organisational bases, OPDs and other forms of community organisations do not survive beyond the starting stages of projects.

This reliance on the donor funding generates perverse incentives that may corrupt the priorities of OPD and impair their representational roles. In some cases when organisations are compelled to always go out and seek whatever funding there is, they end up moving their operations out of the priorities identified by the community and into the thematic areas preferred by the donors thus losing the capability to be local and responsive. The AT2030 needs assessment revealed a highly limited access to sustainable sources of funding as a significant obstacle, and the leadership and governance issues were aggravated by the scarcity of resources (Gebbett, Bandukda, Kilimanjaro Blind Trust, De Bronac De Vazelhes, Osinya, Mahmoud, and Kalovwe, 2025). This funding precarity implies that the OPDs tend to work in a crisis mode and can hardly conduct long-term strategic planning and can hardly invest in the organisational capacity building.

The generation of local income and mobilisation of resources that involve the participation of donors and government advocacy overcome funding dependency. A study on aid that is delivered with dignity in Kenyan settlements, which are low-income, discovered that stories designed to help counter stigma and play to culturally relevant types of agency have no negative effects on donor support and instead increase the belief that recipients had in themselves and in developing their skills (Thomas, Otis, Abraham, Markus, and Walton, 2020). This observation implies that OPDs could orient their funding requests in a manner that upholds dignity of recipients and at the same time appeal to donors. The OPD LEAD Project proved that income-generating projects such as poultry farming and event management generate sustainable sources of income that lessen reliance on foreign donors (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). Secondly, the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, offers OPDs legal strength to force governments to invest in disability programmes by making both the national and county governments put sufficient resources in disability programmes (Oduor, 2024). The integration of these diversified streams helps OPDs to become financially robust and be independent when working on their advocacy missions.

Attitudinal Barriers and Stigma: Addressing Cultural Misconceptions within Communities

Stigma and attitudinal barriers are some of the most endemic and harmful aspects of persons with disability in Kenya that are entrenched in cultural beliefs, language, and social practices. The World Health Organization states that disability is a reflection of the properties of the body of a person, the properties of the society in which people are located, and, given the widespread stigma of disability in Kenya, the reported cases of persons with disabilities might be highly underreported (Tirkha, 2020). Stigma has several mechanisms, such as negative labelling, social exclusion, discrimination, and internalised shame; thus, avoiding the ability of persons with disabilities to lead a normal life in the community and access their rights.

Stereotypes regarding the etiology of disability have a strong presence in most of the Kenyan societies with far reaching consequences on the way people with disabilities are handled. The study of the Bukusu society recorded that language used to express disability is mostly not favorable or pejorative, which echoes and reinforces negative attitudes (Barasa & Telewa, 2020). Especially poor is the case of children born with a disability, when the disability is considered by the society as a curse, and disability is often perceived as a retribution aimed at the sins of their parents, especially the mother (Tirkha, 2020). In the worst-case scenario, husbands can leave their wives

and child after birth because of stigma or both parents can leave the child to be institutionalised altogether (Tirkha, 2020). There are children with disabilities that are put away and this makes them even more deprived of social services and contributes towards the cycles of exclusion and poverty.

Stigma can only be mitigated through multi-level interventions which focus on addresses the personal attitudes, communal norms and institutional practices. A study that involved self-help caregiver groups in Kilifi established that after the intervention, caregiver agency was characterized by togetherness, capacity-building, acceptance and well-being, and notable effects of the intervention were an increase in social support, less perception of especially severe disability in a child, and less influence of extrinsic conditions on the roles of caregivers (Bunning et al., 2020). These outcomes were found to be supported by mechanisms of handling goods and money and social ties and support, which illustrated that empowerment interventions had the ability to effectively modify the stigma in situations where they formed practical skills as well as social support.

Internal Governance of OPDs: Ensuring Diversity within OPDs

Organisational structures of Persons with Disabilities should identify with the entirety of disability community and should therefore be represented in terms of impairment types, gender, age, and other intersectional identities too. Nothing about us without us as a principle involves not only that individuals with disabilities are being represented, but a complete encompassment of disability experiences in OPD leadership and structures of decision making. A study to understand the self-help groups in Kilifi revealed that conflict and corruption led to dissolution of groups hence the need to have a robust governance structure that guarantees accountability and fair representation (Bunning et al., 2020). In the absence of specific focus on diversity and inclusion within OPDs as such, the risk exists that various groups of people, including women with disabilities, people with psychosocial disabilities, or people with intellectual disabilities, will be sidelined in organisations that are supposed to represent them.

The inclusion of all types of impairment in representation in OPD governance is a way of making sure that advocacy agendas capture the entire range of experiences of disability. Physically impaired persons have traditionally been more represented in the OPD leadership, whereas

intellectually impaired, psychosocial impaired and deaf-blind individuals have been underrepresented. A study of the youth perceptions in Kenya established that the notions of disability are influenced by the social stereotypes that determine the perceptions and treatment of the various types of impairments (Kopi, 2020). The OPDs will need to be proactive in reaching underrepresented impairment groups, setting up their meeting and communication to be accessible, and developing leadership development opportunities that will help different members assume governance roles. The young with disabilities also need some special consideration as the young demographic depicts the greatest proportions of individuals with disabilities in Kenya, but young people are not always incorporated in leadership roles (Tirkha, 2020). Youth leadership is a sure way to make OPDs sustainable over the generations and introduce new insights into advocacy strategies.

Urban-Rural Divide: Reaching Grassroots, Marginalized, or Rural OPDs

The urban-rural gap in Kenya has posed wide gaps in access, resources, and visibility of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, where the rural and the grassroots OPDs are systematically disadvantaged relative to their urban counterparts. The analysis of 2019 census data indicates that most persons with disabilities in Kenya reside in the rural setting, but rural OPDs in Kenya have lower access to funding, technical assistance, and opportunities to engage in policy areas as compared to organisations based in urban settings (Tirkha, 2020). The AT2030 needs assessment established that urban-based OPDs in Nairobi and Mombasa are usually better and better equipped than the rural ones in Kisumu, and that resources and support are not evenly distributed across the regions, which leaves the most marginalised organisations with the least capacity to represent their constituencies (Gebbett et al., 2025).

The unique issues in rural OPDs have to be supported with unique supports. The rural OPDs find it hard to meet, organize activities, and have frequent contact due to geographic dispersion. Inadequate infrastructure such as inefficient road networks, un-reliable internet connectivity are limitations to information, training opportunities and participation in policy processes at the national level. The disability in Kenya report states that the national benefits are there, but there are still awareness barriers to accessing the benefits, which are especially sharp in the rural setting because there may be no information about rights and available services that would reach persons with disabilities or their families (Tirkha, 2020). The rural OPDs tend to be the sole providers of

disability-related information and aid in their communities, but have limited resources and little technical support.

To target the grassroots and rural OPDs, there must be specific efforts to meet the structural obstacles to engagement. The rural areas should also receive capacity-building programs in available formats and local languages instead of presupposing that rural representatives of the OPD can travel to the urban centres to get the training. The regional workshops in Nairobi, Mombasa, and Kisumu of the AT2030 programme are an effort to decentralize capacity-building, which requires additional investment in order to access OPDs in more remote locations (Gebbett et al., 2025). Mobile technologies also present the potential of geographic distance closure, where through mobile based assistive technology and digital platforms, rural OPDs can access information, network with other peers, and be involved in advocacy networks. Nonetheless, the technological interventions should be supported by the training and continuous support, and consider differences in the digital infrastructure and the literacy in the rural regions.

Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025 allows the national and county governments to narrow the gap between the cities and rural areas by requiring a proper allocation of resources on disability programmes by both governments (Oduor, 2024). The county governments have a special role of reaching the rural population because they are more in touch with the communities and they will be able to know more about the local contexts. To support the idea that more equal resources should be distributed in urban and rural zones, one can refer to the baseline assessment of disability inclusion in county governments, which is also the evidence that can be employed (Oduor, 2024). OPD networks and coalitions may also be involved in overcoming the urban-rural divide, including curing and encouraging rural counterparts in the urban-based OPDs, sharing resources and experience, and making rural advocacy agendas heard at the national scale.

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Contextualizing Capacity Building: Tailoring Approaches to Local Socio-Economic Contexts

To be effective in capacity building Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), it is necessary to carefully contextualise within the particular socio-economic, cultural and geographic realities that organisations exist within. The capacity development model that fits all people is unsuccessful in recognizing the considerable differences in resources, infrastructure, cultural

standard, and communal setups that influence the functioning of OPDs and the resources needed to sustain them. A study investigating the role of self-help groups in the provision of care to children with disabilities in Kilifi County proved that effective interventions need to be supported by localized knowledge of disability, family beliefs, and community relationships (Bunning, Gona, Newton, Andrews, Blazey, Ruddock, Henery, and Hartley, 2020). The researchers discovered that the mechanisms of handling goods and money and social ties and support were positive contributors that the study showed the necessity of developing on the current local practices and relationships instead of introducing new models.

The environment is defined as the socio-economic context, which greatly defines the viability and suitability of various capacity-building measures. The intensive residential training might not be feasible in the rural areas with little infrastructure and dispersed populations, and some alternatives might be provided with the help of mobile technologies and community-based mentoring. The AT2030 needs assessment has proved the fact that the urban-based OPDs in Nairobi and Mombasa are usually more adequately equipped than their rural counterparts in Kisumu, meaning that the approaches to capacity-building should be differentiated to accommodate these baseline differences (Gebbett, Bandukda, Kilimanjaro Blind Trust, De Bronac De Vazelhes, Osinya, Mahmoud, and Kalovwe, 2025). Until rural OPDs have more basic forms of support in building basic forms of governance and communication processes, they might not have the capacity to participate in more advanced advocacy or mobilisation of resources.

The cultural contextualisation is also crucial, especially when it comes down to disability stigma and attitudes towards disability in the community. A study at Bukusu society observed that the language used to describe disability is usually harmful or pejorative, and it portrays and supports negative attitudes that need to be countered through capacity-building programs (Barasa and Telewa, 2020). Good capacity building will play with these cultural realities and work with community leaders and employ locally resonant framings to interrogate stigma without undermining cultural values. The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, acknowledges this necessity by proposing positions to raise awareness to combat stereotypes and implementation of harmful practices, but it will have to be implemented locally basing its approaches on diverse ethnic and cultural contexts of Kenya (CBM Global, 2025).

Shifting from Project-Based to Systemic Change: Ensuring Longevity of CBID Programs

The shift between the project-based interventions to the systemic change is a systemic issue of Community-Based Inclusive Development, where the interventions must incorporate the issue of disability inclusions in the permanent institutions and processes and not in the parallel structures which fall when the project funding ceases. Although project-based strategies can deliver significant results within a short time, they usually do not have long-term effects since they do not change the systems that generate exclusion. A study on self-help groups in Kilifi showed that out of twenty groups formed over ten months of set up, nine failed because of conflicts, corruption, and harsh environment conditions proving the instability of community structures that rely on projects (Bunning et al., 2020). This attrition rate highlights the need to use systemic strategies to create resiliency and inculcate support into the current community and government systems.

To bring about systemic change, OPDs must have a strategic involvement in the government planning and budgeting process so that the inclusion of disability can be felt in the mainstream programmes with the sustainable funding stream. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities conducted the baseline assessment on disability inclusion in county governments and found that although only sixteen counties have enacted disability legislation, and twelve counties still have standalone disability policies full of promise, there is evidence of positive practice: thirty-nine counties have employed persons with disabilities, and thirty-five counties have economic empowerment programmes specifically targeted at persons with disabilities (Oduor, 2024). OPDs with established regular consultation processes with the county governments are in a better position to affect the budgetary allocations, the programme design and the services delivery so as to integrate the aspect of disability in their daily government operations as opposed to the interim projects.

The institutional capacity of OPDs themselves also needs to be strengthened in order to enable them to maintain advocacy and monitoring functions forever. The OPD LEAD Project revealed that special assistance in the governance systems, financial responsibility, and record-keeping allows OPDs to move beyond informal organisations to credible, recognised organisations capable of long-term participation in the government and development partners (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). 9 of 11 organizations involved in OPDs opened running offices and ensured a better presence at both community and county and national levels, building long-term disability advocacy organizations (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). It is this institutional reinforcing coupled with

streamlined funding sources such as income-generating processes that form organisations that continue to survive beyond the project life cycle and provide a sustained pressure to initiate systemic change.

Systemic shift through the incorporation of disability indicators in national and county monitoring systems is yet another avenue to change. When regularly gathered and published data on the inclusion of disability in sectors is taken by governments, the concept of disability starts to be exposed to mainstream accountability frameworks instead of being the preserve of special disability programmes. This integration is supported by the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025 that asks employers to file annual reports on PWD employment and impose accessibility standards on all new buildings (Oduor, 2024). The implementation of these provisions should be monitored by OPDs and the data obtained should be used to promote continuous improvement but should not focus on the implementation of specific project but a systemic overhaul of the system.

Digital Transformation of OPDs: Leveraging Digital Tools for Advocacy and Operations

Digital transformation also presents great potential to Organisations of Persons with Disabilities to amplify their advocacy, streamline processes, and expand their constituencies, however, to realise such opportunities, it is necessary to tackle the major challenges in digital access and literacy. The AT2030 needs assessment revealed that access to assistive technologies and digital skills are the significant gaps that Kenyan OPDs have to address, with the majority of organisations not having the hardware, connection, and expertise to use digital tools to their advantage (Gebbett et al., 2025). Closing this digital divide would be crucial in ensuring that OPDs are able to engage in the present-day advocacy and development spaces, where more and more communication, information-sharing, and policy engagement takes place through digital means.

Digital tools provide specific opportunity to enhance advocacy and networking of OPD. The social media platforms help OPDs to give voice to their messages, to enlist supporters and to interact with policymakers and the masses at little cost. The use of digital data collection tools will make it easier to collect data generated by citizens, where OPDs can record barriers and violations and employ this information in advocacy (Malinga & Gumbo, 2023). The AT2030 programme provided a training on mobile based assistive technologies and maximizing with generative AI based systems to facilitate access information to equip OPDs with viable digital skills to promote

advocacy (Gebbett et al., 2025). These instruments allow OPDs to be more effective in their activities and to reach more people than they could only do with the use of conventional methods.

Digital transformation is also the one that increases OPD operations and governance. Telecommuting between members located far apart will be facilitated by cloud-based solutions, eliminating isolation of remote rural OPDs. Online fiscal management systems enhance accountability and transparency, and these features will make OPDs more appealing to possible donors. Online learning platforms give access to capacity-building resources, which would otherwise be unavailable, and allow building the skills continuously (Malinga and Gumbo, 2023). These benefits are however only realised through an investment in infrastructure as well as human capacity. The urban-rural digital divide implies that the rural OPDs have a systematic disadvantage in access to both connection and training in digital skills, and in such a case, specific interventions are necessary to make sure that the digital transformation does not increase the existent inequalities but on the contrary, diminishes them (Gebbett et al., 2025). Training should be made available, in a wide range of formats and languages and with a continuous process of technical assistance in order to make sure that OPDs will be able to use digital tools efficiently in their respective scenarios.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion and Recommendations: Summarizing key findings and proposing actionable steps for stakeholders, including donors, government, and OPD leaders

This conceptual paper has established that Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Kenya can be considered inevitable agents of change to attain sustainable Community-Based Inclusive Development (CBID). Although progressive legal frameworks exist such as the Constitution of Kenya 2010 (Article 54), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and the comprehensive Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025, their implementation continues to be hampered by poor organizational capacity, dependency on funds and lack of strategic governance and the institutional exclusion of persons with disabilities in the local development process.

The main conclusion states that is impossible to achieve sustainable CBID with the help of short-term externally-oriented projects. Rather, it requires long-term investment in building stronger

OPDs within the realms of organizational governance, financial independence, evidence-based advocacy, technical skills in inclusion, strategic relationships, and digital revolution. Taking a two-track strategy of mainstreaming disability in every sector and offering specific assistance, OPDs can transform themselves to becoming project implementers to inclusive and community-owned development leaders.

Summary of Key Arguments: The inextricable link between strong OPDs and sustainable, inclusive communities

Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) are the key to sustainable and inclusive communities in Kenya. Those with weak OPDs have dependency cycles, fragmented interventions, and ongoing exclusion, whereas those with strong OPDs are the ones that encourage systemic changes. OPDs can be in the lead in championing CBID which will incorporate the inclusion of disability in health, education, livelihood, and social protection systems through better governance, diversified funding, strong advocacy, technical capacity in CRPD-oriented programming, and strategic partnership.

This leadership secures local ownership, stigma is lessened with the help of community sensitization, policy influence is created by generating evidence and helps to bridge the long-standing gap between national commitments and the reality of the grassroots. Finally, OPDs are as strong and sustainable as possible and, consequently, the disability inclusion will be the rhetoric or the experience. Strong OPDs not only serve the interests of persons with disabilities, but they turn around more social justice, economic self-sufficiency, and equal development of whole communities and meet the constitutional and international priorities of Kenya.

Strategic Recommendations: Actionable steps for stakeholders (Donors, Government, NGOs)

In order to turn the proposed framework into reality, the stakeholders need to embrace specific, aligned measures:

- Donors and development partners: Shift to processes to ensure that they offer long-term (3-4 year) core funding to OPD to strengthen the institution. Give priority to grants to develop financial sustainability (i.e. proposal-writing training, social enterprise seed capital), digital infrastructure

and leadership development. Create joint forums between donors and OPDs in order to unify priorities and minimize fragmentation.

- National and county governments: Completely implement the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2025 through the establishment of specific disability lines of the county integrated development plans, the compulsory appointment of the OPD to the development committees, and the establishment of clear feedback channels. Invest in capacity-building activities of the public officials regarding the inclusive planning and CRPD requirements.
- NGOs and civil society groups: Change models of parallel implementation to real partnerships- Co-designing programs with OPDs, giving technical assistances instead of replacing and lobbying side by side to enforce policies. Foster participatory research and data systems, which are led by OPD, to improve evidence-based advocacy.
- OPD leaders: Invest in internal change, such as participative governance (gender, youth, impairment diversity), accountable financial management, and digital strategizing. Build the active involvement of county assemblies and national organizations to take up the space in decision-making.

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