

Working with Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) to strengthen Multi-Year Resilience Programmes (MYRPs)



Case Study & How To Guide

THE CHALLENGE

People with disabilities are disproportionately impacted and excluded during crises, but humanitarian actors frequently lack the knowledge to include them in their work.



THE SOLUTION

Meaningful engagement of OPDs, which strengthens programme design and delivery and results in more inclusive programming.

Overview

Organisations working in humanitarian contexts know that people with disabilities should be included, but often don't know where to begin with working in partnership with OPDs.

This good practice example shares strategies for engaging with OPDs and lessons learned from how an Education Cannot Wait funded Multi-Year Resilience Programme strengthened their work through OPD partnership.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities mandates that States actively involve OPDs in policy development and decision-making that affects people with disabilities, both domestically and in international cooperation. Article 32 specifically highlights OPDs as key partners for inclusive and accessible international development programs.

Effective Partnerships with OPDs in Humanitarian Action: A Case Study

This case study looks at the collaboration in Colombia between Education Cannot Wait's MYRP and national OPD Asdown Colombia.

A Multi-Year Resilience Programme (MYRP) is a program that provides funding to crisis-affected areas over a period of years.



The goal of Education Cannot Wait's MYRPs is to ensure that children have access to education in emergency situations.

Recognising the need for better links with OPDs, the second ECW-funded MYRP in Colombia (MYRP2) began engaging with Asdown, a national OPD representing individuals with intellectual disabilities and their families in Colombia. Like many OPDs within the intellectual disabilities movement, in addition to being a representative organisation Asdown is also a key leader in the inclusive education space in Colombia.

Asdown was invited to join the development committee for the MYRP2, and played a number of key roles in supporting development of the MYRP:

Providing Expertise:

Asdown advised on inclusive education principles, ensuring the project methodology aligned with the CRPD and the lived experiences of families. Their early involvement was vital as education interventions can unintentionally exclude children with intellectual disabilities.

Identifying Inclusive Practices:

Asdown has extensive expertise on the key ingredients for inclusive education, and supported MYRP grantees to build teacher training on inclusive pedagogy into the programme. This essential step is often missed in education programming.

Guiding Programme Delivery:

Asdown provided guidance on good practices in inclusive education and advocated for ongoing engagement with families throughout and beyond the project - including supporting the MYRP grantees to create specific follow up mechanisms for families engaged in the design process.

Facilitating Identification and Access:

Asdown helped connect the MYRP grantees with local OPDs, bridging the gap between humanitarian actors and families of children with disabilities who may be hesitant to engage with unfamiliar organisations due to stigma and discrimination.

Coordinating Inputs from Diverse OPDs:

Asdown facilitated workshops connecting the MYRP development committee with national and local OPDs representing various impairment groups, ensuring diverse voices informed the programme development.

The incorporation of Asdown was timely and allowed the program to be strengthened with an inclusive approach from the formulation stage to the date of the implementation process. Thanks to Asdown's advice, key aspects of the program were strengthened, such as teacher training in inclusive education, the incorporation of follow-up mechanisms for the participation of children and adolescents with disabilities and the promotion of collaboration with families.

Monica Cortes, Asdown

Through the engagement of Asdown as an OPD expert, the MYRP2 development committee had a stronger final product:

Better understanding of the needs of children with disabilities:

OPDs bring a deep understanding of barriers faced by people with disabilities. Engagement of diverse OPDs in the MYRP development process strengthened the program with an inclusive approach from the beginning that took into account the barriers and needs for all children with disabilities, including the most marginalised.

More Inclusive Programme Design:

OPDs are experts on inclusive programme methodologies and on what works for CRPD-compliant programming. Engagement of OPDs in the MYRP development ensured the programme methodologies didn't miss any key ingredients for CRPD-compliant education programming.

We are clear that our work on the issue of children and young people with disabilities and how we will be able to include them will be based on the knowledge that Asdown can give us from the project that they advance, and that is a great support for all the implementation of the different activities.

Juliana Iglesias, UNICEF
Coordinator of MYRP 2 Consortium

Meaningful Engagement of Families as Key Stakeholders:

Organisations of people with disabilities that also represent their families have a unique perspective and reach, and can support organisations to engage with families as key partners in supporting the education of children with disabilities. Family participation, facilitated by OPDs, is critical for identifying barriers and building effective solutions.

Improved Programme Delivery:

OPDs also typically have experience with practical delivery of programming, and can deliver advice on what works in practice. Asdown's advice strengthened key aspects like teacher training and follow-up mechanisms for children and families.

The educational institutions state that they do not know how to attend students with disabilities, so the work we will do in alliance with Asdown will be of great help and we expect joint actions with the professional specialized in inclusive education appointed by the consortium.

Juliana Iglesias, UNICEF
Coordinator of MYRP 2 Consortium

What works?

How-Tos for Engaging OPDs in Programme Planning in Multi-Year Resilience Programmes and Beyond

To replicate the successful partnership experience engaging OPDs in Colombia's MYRP2, organisations can take steps towards embedding these key ingredients in their programming:

- **Involve OPDs from the beginning** of the project - Work with OPDs partners from the earliest design stages - the nuanced understanding that OPDs have of barriers and needs are essential in those first conversations about a programme's aims and objectives.
- **Establish formal partnerships** with OPDs and families - this means the OPDs aren't engaged in the programme just as delivery agents, as mobilisers, or as one-off consultation participants. Instead, they are genuine thought partners and are engaged in formal partnerships at the strategic level.
- **Engage in joint planning** with OPDs and families of children with disabilities in all activities - their insights are key for ensuring that project activities are inclusive, accessible, and meet real needs. OPDs can support organisations to reach children with disabilities and families in consultation stages to make sure key stakeholders are engaged and giving advice.
- **Invest in capacity-building** for both OPDs and humanitarian actors. OPDs fill knowledge gaps on inclusion for humanitarian organisations, and humanitarian organisations fill knowledge gaps about crisis response for OPDs. Plan for how mutual learning partnerships can support and strengthen the knowledge of both groups.
- **Ensure information sharing** about inclusive education initiatives. OPDs, INGOs, and others in the inclusive education delivery space have access to different networks and information, all partners are stronger for being able to pull together knowledge from different pockets of the inclusive education sector to be able to create a well informed programme.

The experience of Colombia's MYRP2 makes it clear that by meaningfully engaging OPDs like Asdown, development programmes can become more inclusive and effectively address the needs of children with disabilities.