



**Pacific  
Disability  
Forum**

# **“GROWING STRONGER TOGETHER” A TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY FOR OPDs**

**LOCALISATION APPROACH TO ORGANISATION DEVELOPMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL STRENGTHENING OF ORGANISATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE PACIFIC**

**Briefing Note 1.0 (for External Partners)**

## **1.0 Background**

*Growing Stronger Together*, is this initiative aiming to strengthen governance, improve efficiency and effectiveness, build capacity, fortify compliance and due diligence and above all to reconfirm the relevance of the OPDs as NGOs operating in a very competitive and volatile environment.

We believe that this is a **ground-breaking** and **cutting-edge** initiative where the process is home grown and tailored to suit the **size, context, capacity, and environment of each area of operation**, both in relation to PDF as the secretariat and the 30 member OPDs in 14 Pacific Island countries and territories coming under the program. While the program involves due diligence and compliance process and training for the OPDs, it is not called this but rather **“Growing Stronger Together”** to encapsulate the essence of the initiative: a **transformational journey for the next three years**.

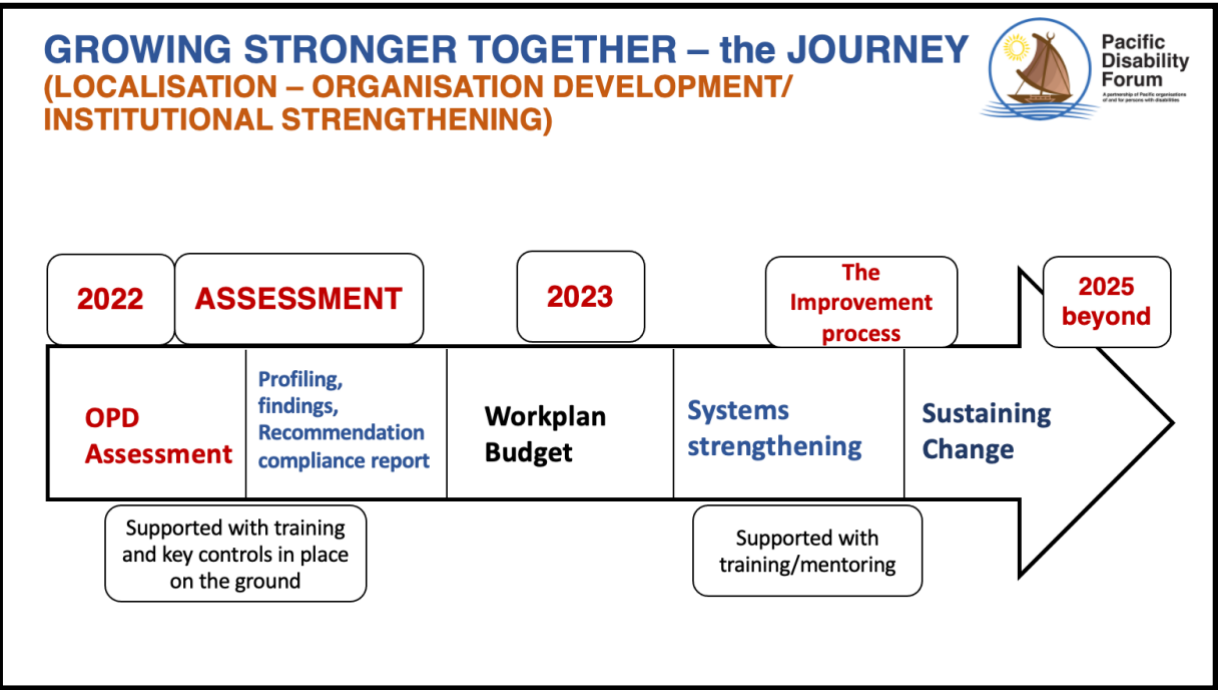
The dramatic and sudden changes to ways of working brought on by the **COVID pandemic** highlighted that our community had to invest into **building the infrastructure and platform to connect online** and establish a new platform for communication. While other mainstream NGOs progressed with their former activities post-COVID, we knew we had to **focus efforts on strengthening these foundations**

Currently across the region, the **political seascape** and **uptake for disability inclusion remains slow** in areas such as CRPD compliant and non-discriminatory legislation, policy integration and practises, resource mobilisation and meaningful use of data to guide policy change. We want to position ourselves to be a credible and trusted partner and be an effective and an efficient organisation to influence policy change. Pacific governments have ratified the CRPD except for Tonga, and while the urgency to ratify provided great

momentum, implementation to realise the right is quite uneven across the countries, though there are progress and gains made in a number of areas. **The need is clear for strong, credible, efficient OPDs who can function as trusted and effective partners to influence policy change,** pushing disability inclusion advocacy over the ridges of development for a more profound response beyond inclusion into disability equity and rights development, where **resourcing, coverage, reach, data and a whole of government approach matters.**

The Growing Stronger Together initiative arose from this recognition: that to meet this need, we needed to support the strengthening of our OPD members, putting the disability movement’s ‘house in order first’ so to speak. Growing Stronger Together is our version of **localisation of organisational development or institutional development.** It is a process tailored for OPDs, delivered by an OPD. This means that it is uniquely able to identify, connect, capture context and provide support.

The Model below shows the process of the initiative



## 2.0 Methodology and Key Activities

### 2.1 Assessments

The OPD assessment process stems out of PDF’s recognition that the following need to be addressed: **compliance, policy gaps, oversight, governance, financial management, human resource management, and monitoring and evaluation.** Hence, in 2022, this process has started with comprehensive assessment carried out for 30 OPDs in 13 countries.

This assessment phase of the program is applied across **the OPD members who receive core funding and project funding from PDF;** and can be extended to all members of the PDF Board who do not receive core or project funding from PDF, and OPDs that are associate members who receives project funding from PDF. It demonstrates that **we are committed to**

**improving our compliance starting at PDF** represented at Board level and cascading to all our OPDs - full and associate members - who either receive core funding and project funding.

The assessment process is a combination of the following:

- i. SWOT analysis with each OPD Board and Staff as well as volunteers.**  
This activity is undertaken in-country with the OPD. The conversation with the board and staff is based on trust and respect, meaning there can be honest, full and frank discussion which greatly benefits all involved and especially the OPD. This means we can fully grapple with weaknesses and threats as well as strengths and opportunities, in a culturally appropriate and strengths-based way, due to the strong trust and localisation approach taken by the program. The strong emphasis is always on transparency and finding ways for support within the OPD and from PDF, to take ownership and improve together moving forward.
- ii. Completion of the assessment templates:** using the information from SWOT and further discussion with the Office Manager.  
An organisation self assessment template is completed as well as an Understanding, Planning auditing and planning template is completed as well.
- iii. Profiling of the OPDs from the information collected**  
The OPD profile is developed out of the information collected, that can be publicly shared to support their efforts and raise their visibility.
- iv. Profiling OPD risks**  
The OPD risks are assessed and rated with its impact. The risk is managed and addressed through the development of the OPD workplan.
- v. Workplan for system improvement**  
After the assessment, at least nine to twelve months of work is needed on areas identified to be improved. A workplan is developed to prioritise these. PDF will ensure that the OPDs are supported in ongoing implementation of the findings of their assessments. The timeline for these workplans is set against the PDF Strategic Plan, i.e., until 2025, however, we hope that by end of 2024 or mid-2025, all assessment of the OPD will be completed, findings collated and shared, allowing longer implementation period for these workplans.
- vi. Budget to support the improvement process**  
A budget is developed to support the improvement process
- vii. Compliance**  
As an outcome of the facilitated self-assessment process, A confidential compliance report is issued to the OPD once the improvement process is completed. This internal facing report is drawn upon and used as a foundation for the OPD to respond to the

compliance requirements of partners and donors. Compliance is assessed at the following:

- a) Constitution/by laws assessment
- b) Policy framework – finance, HR, safe guarding and code of conduct
- c) Procedures
- d) Strategic plan
- e) Governance capacity
- f) Leadership
- g) Overall program capacity

## 2.2 Accompaniment at the Assessment

### Capacity building and training

While undertaking assessments in-country with OPDs, we also deliver a range of training to the OPD to support the OPD governing board and staff to understand the process, their roles in the assessment, and importantly their roles in the improvement efforts afterwards. This means that while undertaking the assessment, we also start to build capacity around **all aspects of compliance and governance** and **put in place key controls** as the starting point of improvement and minimise some of the risks identified.

This training seeks to provide foundational capacity building around governance and day-to-day leadership of the organisation, as well as addressing operational capacity to improve the immediate functioning of the office through the projects and program. The following were addressed via training and one-to-one hands on capacity building:

- a) Governance training
- b) Leadership training
- c) Strategic plan consultation
- d) Finance training – budget and acquittal
- e) Data training – the use of WG questions to collect data and support around reporting
- f) Report writing
- g) Communication
- h) Monitoring and evaluation

### Engaging Stakeholders

It was important to engage with partners and stakeholders on the ground, to share the work done with the OPD through the initiative and to ensure partners are aware of the role of the OPDs. This check in with partners and government was an important step in feeling the pulse on CRPD implementation through government sectoral policies as well as partners mainstreaming effort on disability inclusion, as well as gauging their relationship or knowledge of the OPDs and their role. All of this forms part of understanding the context the OPD is operating in, how effectively and efficiently they are working towards strategic goals, what challenges may be and how these might be addressed. It also provided hands on capacity building support to the OPD by demonstrating stakeholder engagement, brokering

partnerships and providing opportunities for the OPD representative to ask and learn through the process.

Two key activities to ascertain the above were:

- **Multi-stakeholder dialogue**  
This involved government, donors, UN agencies present on the ground, regional organisations, other NGOs and OPD representatives.
- **Partnership meeting (one-to-one) with government and other stakeholders who are either donors or implementing partners.**  
One-to-one meeting with government disability focal point in the line ministry, donor partners in particular Australia and New Zealand, UN Resident Coordinators, UNDP and other relevant UN agencies, regional organisation like SPC who are critical partners to resource and finance the implementation of government and others policies and investments.

## 2.3 Monitoring Change and Progress

To monitor change and progress, in July 2024 the first reflection workshop was held for the OPDs who have completed assessment in 2022 and 2023. This provided opportunity to share learnings as well as to consult on the OPD policy framework and procedures. The second reflection workshop will be organised for the remaining OPDs.

## 2.4 Oversight

**The program is led by the Director Operations**, in the implementation and the oversight as well as engagement with government and partners on the ground through the multi-stakeholder dialogue approach and partnership meeting.

# 3. Looking ahead

## 3.1 Sustaining Change

To sustain change beyond the first phase of the initiative, PDF will need to work with other organisation and partners who could provide ongoing support through an attachment assignment with the OPDs, either short or long term. This is to acknowledge that PDF will not be able to follow-up on the 30 OPDs all year around.

## 3.2 Scaling Organisation Development

The process is scalable and assessment knowledge is transferrable can be used in any other organisation

## 3.2 Tailor for Uptake

The initiative with its holistic process can be tailored to suit organisation needs.