Global Disability Innovation Hub

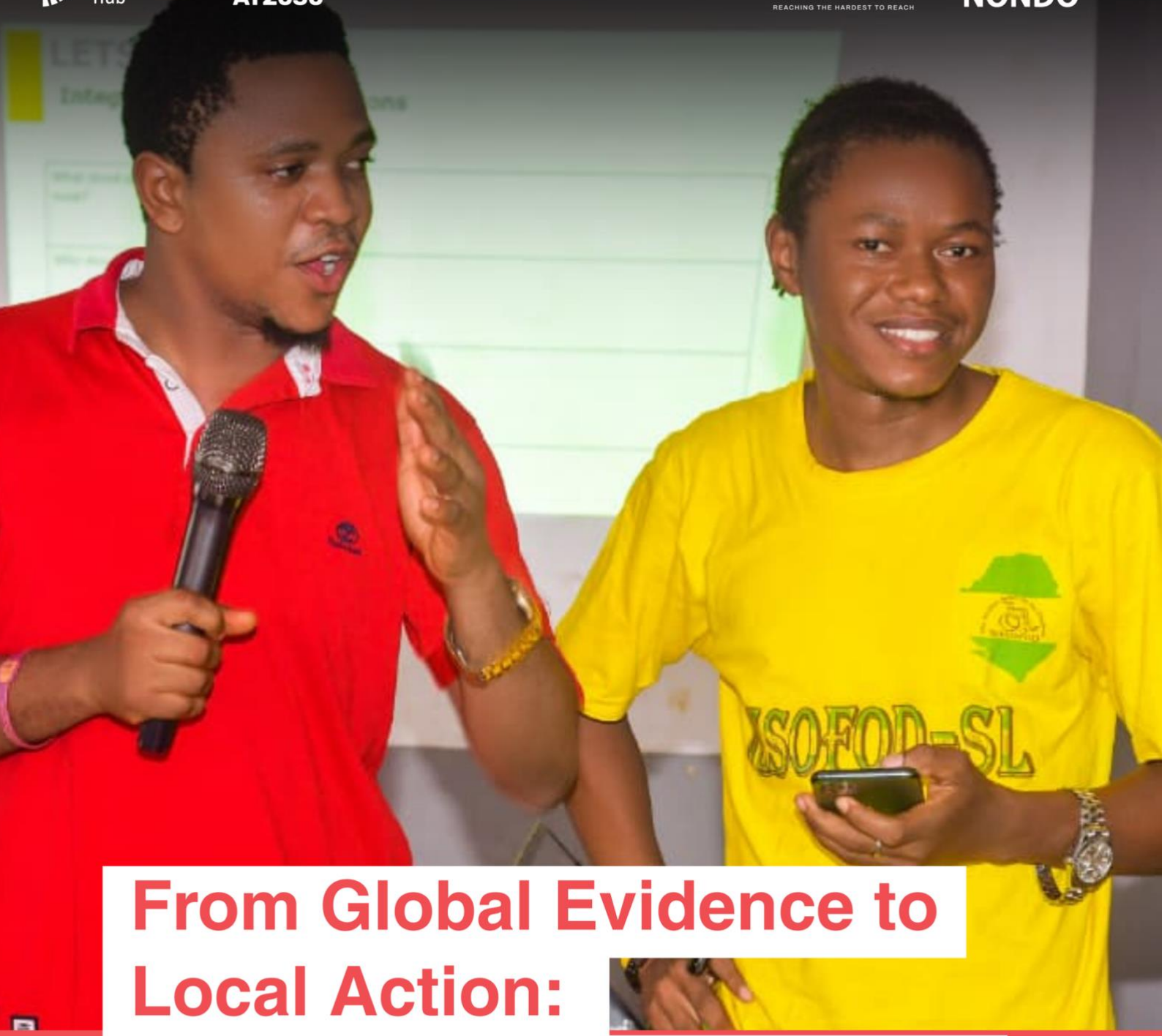
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NONDO



From Global Evidence to Local Action:

Learnings from Local Amplification and a Global Dialogue

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Authors are listed in alphabetical order by surname; the order does not reflect relative contribution.

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1 Background

Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) are critical to advancing disability rights and assistive technology access, yet those in low- and middle-income countries still struggle to access the funding required to do so.

Through the AT2030 programme, GDI Hub worked with eight OPD partners to understand these barriers and identify ways to improve access to funding, leading to two publications: a funding landscape report and good practice guidance for OPDs.

Recognising that impact lies not in reports and guidance but in how they are used, we asked:

How can research on access to funding for OPDs be both locally and globally relevant and impactful?

To answer this, the project:

1. Funded OPD-led amplification in Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia
2. Ran a global webinar with the Welfare Society for the Disabled Sierra Leone (WESOFOD-SL) and the Northern Nomadic Disabled Persons Organization (NONDO) and key players in disability inclusive development.

This report summarises what we learned from using research as a starting point for continued advocacy and action.

1.1 About AT2030

AT2030 is a £51.8m programme funded by UK International Development and led by GDI Hub to test new ways of getting assistive technology (AT) to the people who need it around the world.

It combines community-led research with support to bring new solutions to market, while strengthening systems to make inclusion a reality.

AT2030 at a glance:

£51.8m	10 million	54 million
programme funding	people reached directly	people reached indirectly

1.2 About our OPD partners

GDI Hub is continuing its work on OPDs' access to funding under AT2030 with two partners: WESOFOD-SL in Sierra Leone and NONDO in Kenya.

1.2.1 Welfare Society for the Disabled Sierra Leone (WESOFOD-SL)

Founded in 2004, WESOFOD-SL is an OPD based at the Village of Hope in Kambia District, Sierra Leone. It works on inclusive education, health, livelihoods, climate justice, inclusive agriculture, social protection and governance. WESOFOD-SL also supports and strengthens other OPDs across Sierra Leone.



WESOFOD-SL members and OPD partners in Sierra Leone.

Website: https://wesofod.org/our-work/

Contact: info@wesofod.org

1.2.2 Northern Nomadic Disabled Persons Organization (NONDO)

NONDO is a Kenyan OPD advocating for the rights, inclusion and meaningful participation of persons with disabilities from nomadic and pastoralist communities. It works across Kenya's arid and semi-arid counties, where communities have long faced marginalisation and isolation.



NONDO members and partners in Kenya.

Website: https://nondokenya.org/

Contact: info@nondokenya.org

2 Executive summary

After publishing AT2030 research on the challenge and recommendations of improving OPD access to funding, GDI Hub asked: how can research on access to funding for OPDs be both locally and globally relevant and impactful? To answer this, we supported OPD-led amplification in Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia, and developed a global webinar with two OPD partners through participatory design.

Research involving local communities has long been criticised as extractive: communities give their time and lived experience but see little change. Participatory dissemination offers an alternative, treating the sharing of findings as a dialogue in which communities help decide what findings mean and how they are used. This informed what we call "amplification": the idea that meaningful participation extends beyond publication of the research.

Each OPD partner chose how to use the findings locally, through workshops, dialogues, a national webinar, advocacy videos and translation. Four common learnings were:

- **Local workshops made evidence more locally relevant for advocacy.**
- **Funded research amplification created connections and opportunities for collective action.**
- **OPDs gained knowledge and confidence to navigate and advocate around funding.**
- **Post publication activities created pathways for continued action beyond the initial activities.**

Whilst these are early outcomes, they show how funding OPD-led amplification can carry global research beyond publication.

The global webinar, designed in partnership with two OPDs who participated in the research, then carried the findings, and OPDs' experience of amplifying them, to funders and international development organisations, attracting 363 registrants from 72 countries. Defining key messages, audience, key notes and panellists in paid

collaboration with communities whose knowledge had shaped the work, findings and recommendations to date, was a methodology which we hope to some extent connected local priorities and voice with global amplification, rebalancing the influence from those who commission research to those it is about.

Through our post publication activities, we reflect on how research on access to funding for OPDs be both locally and globally relevant and impactful. In truth, impact will be realised when OPDs have sufficient resources to shape and contribute to disability inclusive development which impact them and the communities they represent. In the short term, we see that the work does not stop when research, recommendations and guidance are published. Rather:

- **Research becomes locally relevant when OPDs lead how findings are interpreted and used.**
- **Impact depends on connecting OPDs with those who hold power over funding, locally and globally.**
- **Both require learning to move in both directions, supported by investment after publication.**

These outcomes are early. Future engagement should test whether this dialogue changes funding practice, which forms of amplification work best for different types of OPD and levels of support, and whether new OPD networks last. Finally, we encourage other research teams and funders to plan and budget for OPD-led amplification and OPDs in webinar design and delivery; platforming OPD voice and influence beyond publication.

3 Introduction

3.1 From consultation to meaningful participation

Research involving local communities has long been criticised as extractive, particularly where communities repeatedly contribute their time, knowledge and lived experience but see little change [1]. Tongan communities in Aotearoa New Zealand, for example,

saw researchers build careers on studying them with little benefit to them [2]. Participatory health researchers across 24 countries found that colonial and traditional research legacies can reproduce power imbalances, leaving decision-making with external researchers [3].

In disability research, these concerns echo the principle of "Nothing About Us Without Us": that people with disabilities and their organisations should play active roles throughout research. Yet one-off or "tick-box" consultation remains common: disabled people are invited to give their views but have limited ongoing influence over the research agenda, process or outputs [4].

Participatory disability research offers an alternative, involving disabled people as partners in shaping research, from design to recommendations [5].

3.2 From evidence to amplification

The participatory dissemination literature challenges the idea that dissemination is one-way, from researchers to communities. Communities can help decide how findings are interpreted, shared and applied [6], making dissemination a dialogue about what findings mean locally and how to act on them, not just a way to extend a report's reach [7]. Community-based participatory research likewise emphasises involving communities in interpreting and using findings [8].

This informed what we call "amplification": the idea that meaningful participation extends beyond publication. In this project, four OPD partners designed their own amplification activities based on local priorities (Section 4).

3.3 From evidence to global dialogue

The local activities showed what OPDs could do with the findings in their own contexts. But many of the barriers OPDs face sit within funders' systems and practices, which no single national activity can change. Our OPD partners therefore identified funders as the priority audience for taking the findings further.

In response, we developed a global webinar with two partners, WESOFOD and NONDO, through participatory design, to bring the findings, and OPDs' experience of amplifying them, to funders, OPDs and international development organisations. Holding it after the local activities meant OPDs could speak to what had happened since publication, not only to the report. At our partners' request, the webinar focused on development rather than humanitarian funding, and outreach deliberately targeted funders (Section 5).

3.4 Connecting the global and local

GDI Hub's experience suggests that local and global relevance need not compete. Global research can identify shared challenges and open international dialogue; locally led amplification can connect the evidence to national priorities and communities' own advocacy.



Figure 1: The route the project took – from global research to local action and global dialogue.

Figure 1 sets out the route this project took. The global research produced shared findings (Section 1); OPD partners turned them into local advocacy and action (Section 4); and what they learned was carried into a global dialogue with funders (Section 5). Section 6 sets out directions for future engagement.

4 OPD-led local amplification

Following publication of the global research, four OPD partners received small grants to lead amplification activities in Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Kenya and Ethiopia. Each partner decided how best to share and use the findings in their context (Table 1).

Country and OPD partner	Activity	Key output
Sierra Leone – WESOFOD	Workshop with 18 OPD leaders and advocacy video	Draft joint action plan and advocacy recommendations

Country and OPD partner	Activity	Key output
Tanzania – TUSPO	OPD and stakeholder dialogue; policy advocacy	Policy advocacy position developed and presented to the National Disability Advisory Council
Kenya – NONDO	Stakeholder workshop with around 40 participants and social media advocacy	Existing government funding, support and referral mechanisms identified
Ethiopia – FEAPD	National webinar, advocacy video and report translation	Findings shared with national stakeholders; Amharic translation of the report

Table 1: Overview of local amplification activities.

4.1 Sierra Leone – Workshop and video advocacy

WESOFOD held a workshop with 18 OPD leaders to discuss the findings and the barriers and opportunities for funding in Sierra Leone. Participants used the findings to set priorities, producing a draft joint action plan and advocacy recommendations. WESOFOD also produced an advocacy video urging funders, government and OPDs to use the research and guidance. WESOFOD reported that OPDs felt ownership of the report and that it helped funders understand the barriers their own practices create.



Participants at WESOFOD's Disability Stakeholders Amplification Workshop, "Pathways to Funding OPDs", in Sierra Leone.

4.2 Tanzania – OPD dialogue and policy advocacy

The Tanzania Users and Survivors of Psychiatry Organisation (TUSPO), a national membership movement of persons with psychosocial disabilities, brought together OPDs representing a wide range of disability groups with stakeholders from Tanzania's disability funding sector. Participants considered the findings in the Tanzanian context and identified advocacy priorities, which informed a policy position that TUSPO presented to the National Disability Advisory Council.



TUSPO meeting with the Psoriasis Association of Tanzania (PSORATA) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

4.3 Kenya – Stakeholder workshop and social media advocacy

NONDO held a workshop with around 40 participants, mostly from OPDs, alongside government and civil society stakeholders including the National Council for Persons with Disabilities and county government departments. Participants discussed how the findings reflected their experiences and identified existing government funding, support and referral mechanisms that OPDs could access. NONDO also shared the findings on social media. For NONDO, the findings confirmed what individual OPDs had been experiencing in isolation, and the report opened up new conversations.



Participants at NONDO's stakeholder workshop in Kenya.

4.4 Ethiopia – Webinar and Amharic translation

The Federation of Ethiopian Associations of Persons with Disabilities (FEAPD) held a webinar to discuss the findings with stakeholders in Ethiopia, and translated the report into Amharic as a lasting resource.



Slide from FEAPD's webinar setting out how FEAPD will use the research.

4.5 Learnings across the four countries

4.5.1 Amplification made evidence more locally relevant for advocacy

Amplification did more than share the findings; it placed them in local experience, prompting discussion of how funding barriers played out locally and what could be done.

In Kenya, for example, participants strongly recognised their own experiences in the global findings:

> *"Everything that had been in the research is what [the participants] did mention." – NONDO*

The activities also carried the evidence into advocacy, through Sierra Leone's draft joint action plan and Tanzania's policy position.

4.5.2 Amplification created connections and opportunities for collective action

The activities brought together OPDs that might otherwise compete for limited funding, and participants saw collaboration as a route to a stronger collective voice. As one participant in Sierra Leone reflected:

> *"Real change begins when organizations move beyond competing for limited resources and start working together to amplify their collective voice. This workshop inspired that mindset for me. So to me it serves as an eye-opener for going in for funding together."*

In Isiolo, Kenya, OPDs similarly expressed interest in coming together as a network.

4.5.3 OPDs gained knowledge and confidence to navigate and advocate around funding

Participants better understood the barriers and how to respond, and partners reported more confidence in engaging funders and other stakeholders.

> *"[The webinar] strengthened OPDs' awareness of funding challenges and improved their capacity to advocate, engage stakeholders, and explore strategies for sustainability and resource mobilization." – FEAPD, on its national webinar*

> *"This activity gave us the confidence to engage with funders and explain the realities our organization faces." – TUSPO*

In Kenya, discussion also revealed opportunities some OPDs had not known about. The National Council for Persons with Disabilities shared information on access to assistive devices, the County Director of Gender highlighted affirmative funding opportunities, and the Women Representative's Office shared information on scholarships.

> *"We were also able to see what are some of the opportunities in the referral mechanism within the county that persons with disabilities can continue to tap into." – NONDO*

Participants also discussed diversifying beyond international donor funding:

> *"Through this discussion, they have been able to see that funding can come in from different sources, not fully depending on donor funding… The*

importance of trying to diversify and think that funding can come from different avenues was a key takeaway." – NONDO

4.5.4 Amplification created pathways for continued action beyond the initial activities

In three countries, the activities led to next steps that partners are still pursuing: Tanzania's National Disability Advisory Council pledged to support TUSPO's participation in district and regional budget planning; WESOFOD is mapping OPDs in Sierra Leone and connecting them with funders; and NONDO is supporting other OPDs with capacity strengthening.

These are early outcomes, not evidence of longer-term systems change, but they show how funding OPD-led amplification can carry global research beyond reports.

5 Global webinar

5.1 Approach

Building on the local activities, the webinar took the findings and OPDs' priorities to a global stage, with funders as the priority audience identified by our OPD partners. It was delivered with International Sign interpretation and live captioning. WESOFOD and NONDO delivered keynote addresses, followed by a panel with representatives from CBM Global, Humanity & Inclusion, United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK) and CIVICUS. WESOFOD and NONDO designed the webinar with us, shaping its ambition, panel line-up and focus.

5.2 Keynote addresses

Joseph Alieu Kamara, Founder and Executive Director of WESOFOD, opened by asking: what happens when the organisations closest to communities are the furthest from resources? He framed the session within the AT2030 research and its recommendations

for funders and OPDs, stressing that advocacy must continue beyond the webinar, with OPDs leading the change in narrative.

Fatma Mohamed, CEO of NONDO, described NONDO's participation in the research as an honour and reflected on how research can move from the pages of a report into the hands, voices and actions of the people it is meant to serve – in this case, through NONDO's amplification activities.

5.3 Panel discussion

The panel was moderated by Anna Landre, Researcher and PhD Candidate at the Global Disability Innovation Hub, and brought together four speakers.



Moderator Anna Landre with panellists and an International Sign interpreter during the global webinar.

5.4 Panellist key takeaways

5.4.1 Susan Sabano, Member of CIVICUS Board of Directors

Susan emphasised that OPDs understand community needs and barriers that international organisations and funders may not see. Drawing on her work with persons with cerebral palsy and their families in Uganda, she warned that without local leadership, programmes risk being designed around assumptions rather than lived realities. She called for funding that lets local organisations lead rather than simply

implement projects designed elsewhere, including flexible funding, support for organisational capacity, and accessibility costs in all budgets.

> *"If we don't invest in local civil society and OPDs, we risk designing programs that are based on assumptions rather than the lived realities. We also lose the knowledge and leadership of people directly affected by the issues being addressed."*

5.4.2 Anderson Gitonga, OPD Partnership Director, CBM Global

Anderson challenged funders to ask whether their systems are ready to work with OPDs, rather than expecting OPDs to adapt. Drawing on CBM Global's experience, he urged funders to start from OPD priorities, make requirements proportionate to grant size and risk, fund organisations and not just projects, and share decision-making power.

> *"Don't only ask. How can we make OPDs fit our funding systems? Perhaps the more important question is, how can we make our funding systems work better for OPDs?"*

5.4.3 Reem Khan, Inclusive Humanitarian Action Global Specialist, Humanity & Inclusion (HI)

Reem explained that HI adapts its partnerships to OPD priorities and local contexts, using joint assessments to identify needs for financial support, capacity sharing and advocacy. HI combines longer-term partnerships through memoranda of understanding with mapping to reach smaller or less-established groups. Its Making It Work initiative, for example, supports OPDs to document good practice and influence other actors, and

opens funding to smaller OPDs without burdensome administrative and reporting requirements.

> *"What we are increasingly looking at is the added value also of HI to the partner OPD and focusing on capacity sharing [...] with the ideal of an equal partnership."*

5.4.4 Sally Nduta, CEO, United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK)

Sally urged funders to identify OPDs proactively, including through national federations such as UDPK, and called for disability inclusion training for funders and practitioners and for inclusion across programmes such as nutrition, water and climate change. Funders should involve OPDs directly in co-design and recognise their existing expertise rather than assuming they lack capacity. She encouraged OPDs to approach funders with confidence, form consortia, and document and evidence their results.

> *"Show your results, document your results. Let's learn how to document what we are doing and the good work we are doing in our communities. And lastly, let's continue to learn how to use evidence, evidence, evidence in our work."*

Across the panel, the asks of funders converged on six themes (Table 2).

What funders were asked to do	In practice	Raised by
Start from OPD priorities	Recognise OPDs' existing expertise and lived experience; begin organisational strengthening by listening to what OPDs want to achieve	Anderson Gitonga, Reem Khan, Sally Nduta
Make requirements proportionate	Scale due diligence, contracting and reporting to grant size and risk; allow oral or recorded applications; open	Anderson Gitonga, Reem Khan

What funders were asked to do	In practice	Raised by
	routes for small and informal OPDs	
Fund the organisation, not just the project	Provide flexible, longer-term and core funding, including organisational strengthening, reasonable accommodation and accessibility costs	Susan Sabano, Anderson Gitonga
Share decision-making power	Let OPDs lead rather than implement projects designed elsewhere; involve them in co-design; build trust and equal partnerships	Susan Sabano, Anderson Gitonga, Reem Khan, Sally Nduta
Reach OPDs proactively	Identify OPDs through national federations and mapping exercises, including smaller and less-established groups	Sally Nduta, Reem Khan
Mainstream disability inclusion	Train funders and practitioners in disability inclusion and consider it across programmes such as nutrition, water and climate change	Sally Nduta

Table 2: Summary of panellists' asks of funders.

5.5 Audience Q&A: key takeaways

Two audience questions extended the panel's themes. When asked about minimum requirements for OPDs, Anderson Gitonga positioned that small-grant mechanisms should accommodate small and informal OPDs, for example by accepting oral or recorded applications and simplifying reporting. When asked about the growing push for localisation, Sally Nduta described localisation committees in Kenya filled by representatives from outside the communities concerned, noting that genuine localisation means ensuring locally rooted OPDs are represented in decisions.

5.6 Attendance

363	72
registrants	countries

Registrants ranged from executive directors and CEOs to programme officers, OPDs and disability inclusion specialists.

Registrants reported affiliations with a wide range of OPDs, NGOs, international organisations, funders and development finance institutions.

As with the local activities, these are early indicators rather than evidence of changed funding practice, but they show how a participatory global dialogue can carry OPD priorities directly to the funders and organisations positioned to act on them.

6 Directions for future engagement

The outcomes in this report are early. Three questions stand out for future research.

Does dialogue change funding practice? Webinar registrations show interest, not influence. Following up with funders who took part, and tracking commitments such as the Tanzanian National Disability Advisory Council's budget planning, would show whether OPD-led dialogue changes how funding is designed and delivered.

Which forms of amplification work best, and for whom? Partners used workshops, dialogues, a national webinar, videos and translation. Comparing these approaches – including their costs, who they reach, and how results vary, e.g., by type of OPD and level of support, would help research teams and funders plan and budget for amplification as part of the research itself [6,7].

Does collective action last? OPDs in Sierra Leone and Kenya saw collaboration as a route to a stronger voice. Future research could explore whether these networks lead to joint funding applications or consortia over time.

7 Conclusion

We asked how research on access to funding for OPDs can be both locally and globally relevant and impactful. Locally, the research became relevant when OPDs decided how to use it: it fed into action plans and policy positions, connected OPDs with government and with each other, and led to next steps that partners are still pursuing. Globally, a webinar developed through participatory design carried OPDs' priorities to funders and organisations with the power to change how funding works.

These are early outcomes, and further work is needed to test whether this dialogue changes funder or OPD practice. But they suggest that research is most useful when OPDs are funded to take it forward.

7.1 Use of AI

Claude (Anthropic) was used to support grammar, styling and formatting of this report. All content, analysis and conclusions are the authors' own.

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