

From Global Evidence to Local Action: Strengthening Sustainable Funding and Meaningful Engagement of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Tanzania

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2 Key Question

How does global research on improving access to funding for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) translate into Tanzanian context to inform constructive dialogue and advocacy?

2.1 About AT2030

AT2030 is a £51.8m programme funded by UK International Development and led by GDI Hub to explore and test innovative ways to address systematic challenges to get more AT to the people that need it around the world.

AT2030 tests 'what works' to enable access to life-changing assistive technology for all.

AT2030 creates deep community leadership and engagement to generate new evidence & insights, answering critical research questions and developing foundational methodologies to address intersectional challenges and research and evidence gaps. From incubating future tech inspired solutions to venture acceleration, AT2030 brings effective solutions to market - testing new mechanisms and ambitious scaling pathways - while strengthen systems to make inclusion a reality.

The AT2030 has reached 10 million people directly and 54 million indirectly driving a lifetime of potential.



3 Introduction

Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) play an essential role in advancing disability inclusion, promoting human rights, and supporting the implementation of national development priorities¹. However, many OPDs face significant barriers to securing sustainable funding and participating meaningfully in the decisions that affect persons with disabilities¹. When OPDs themselves are under-resourced, their capacity to bridge the assistive technology (AT) access gap is significantly constrained.

Through the UK International Development-funded AT2030 programme, the Global Disability Innovation Hub (GDI Hub) and eight partner OPDs from countries in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific undertook research on improving access to funding for OPDs in low- and middle-income countries¹. The global research identified the drivers of limited funding for OPDs to operate and contribute and presented recommendations for both funders and OPDs to improve funding pathways for OPD participation. Publications to date, below:

[Pathways to Funding For Organisations of Persons with Disabilities in Low- and-Middle-Income Countries](#)

[Good Practice Guidance from & for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities \(OPDs\) in Low-Middle Income Countries \(LMICs\)](#)

The Tanzania Users and Survivors of Psychiatry Organisation (TUSPO), a national membership movement of persons with psychosocial disabilities, was one of the eight OPD partners in this work. Following the publications, TUSPO were funded to

¹ Rebecca Joskow, Pollyanna Wardrop, and Anna Landre, *Pathways to Funding for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) in Low- and Middle-Income Countries*, prepared by the Global Disability Innovation Hub and partners for the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (London: Global Disability Innovation Hub, 2026), <https://at2030.org/pathways-to-funding-opds/>.



contextualise and amplify findings and recommendations in their ecosystem. This paper describes the process, outputs and outcomes from TUSPO doing so.

3.1 Tanzanian Policy Context

Tanzania ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2009². Article 4(3) of the Convention requires governments to consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities through their representative organisations, while Article 29 guarantees participation in political and public life, and Article 33(3) requires that persons with disabilities and their representative organisations participate fully in monitoring implementation of the Convention².

The Tanzania Persons with Disabilities Act 2010³ provides a national legal framework for protecting and advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. The Act establishes the National Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities to “oversee, at a National level, amongst other mandates, the promotion of implementation and the equalisation of opportunities for persons with disabilities”⁴. The act also established the National Fund for Persons with Disabilities, which came into effect in 2024. At a national level, OPDs are organised to form the umbrella organization Tanzania Federation of Disabled Peoples’ Organisations (TFDPO), commonly known as SHIVYAWATA, established in 1992.

² United Nations, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (New York: United Nations, 2006), arts. 4(3), 29, and 33(3), <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>

³ United Republic of Tanzania, *The Persons with Disabilities Act, 2010* (Dar es Salaam: Government of Tanzania, 2010), https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2019/11/Tanzania_Persons-with-Disabilities-Act-2010.pdf.

⁴ Rural and Urban Development Research Associates (RODRA), *Repository on Disability Rights in Africa: Tanzania*, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, <https://www.rodra.co.za/tanzania>.



Against this background, TUSPO used the publications to inform local dialogue on improving access to funding for OPDs in the region with stakeholders from across Tanzania's disability funding ecosystem.

4 Local dialogue

Over a two-month period, TUSPO met with OPDs from across Tanzania's disability funding ecosystem. The engagement brought together perspectives representing people with intellectual disabilities, Deaf people, blind and visually impaired people, deafblind people, persons with physical disabilities, persons with spinal cord injuries, persons with albinism, persons with spina bifida and hydrocephalus, and persons with psoriasis and other skin-related disabilities. The OPD dialogue and contextualized report findings informed key messages for a policy advocacy position that TUSPO took to the National Disability Advisory Council.

Stakeholder	Sector	Disability constituency or role	Location
National Disability Advisory Council (NDAC)	Government / policy body	National disability policy, planning, and government coordination	National
Shirikisho la Vyama vya Watu wenye Ulemavu Tanzania (SHIVYAWATA)	National umbrella OPD	National federation representing Organisations of Persons with Disabilities	National
Tanzania Association for Mental Health (TAMH)	OPD	Persons with intellectual disabilities	Dar es Salaam



Association of Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Tanzania (ASBHT)	OPD	Persons with spina bifida and hydrocephalus	Dar es Salaam
Chama Cha Viziwi Tanzania (CHAVITA), the Tanzania Association of the Deaf	OPD	Deaf persons	Dar es Salaam
Tanzania League of the Blind (TLB)	OPD	Persons who are blind or have visual impairments	Dar es Salaam
Tanzania Albino Society (TAS)	OPD	Persons with albinism	Dar es Salaam
Psoriasis Association of Tanzania (PSORATA)	OPD	Persons with psoriasis and skin-related disabilities	Dar es Salaam
Tanzania Society for the Deafblind (TASODEB)	OPD	Persons who are deafblind	Dar es Salaam
Chama Cha Walemavu Tanzania (CHAWATA), the Tanzania Association of Persons with Physical Disabilities	OPD	Persons with physical disabilities	Dar es Salaam



Kilimanjaro Association of Spinal Cord Injuries (KASI)	OPD	Persons with spinal cord injuries	Dar es Salaam
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Table 1 Stakeholders met with throughout TUSPO's local amplification activities. 31 total stakeholders were engaged through these activities.



Figure 1 Meeting with SHIVYAWATA (umbrella OPD), national federation representing organisations of persons with disabilities in Tanzania, stakeholder meeting, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.



Figure 2 Psoriasis Association of Tanzania (PSORATA), advocacy for persons with skin-related disabilities, stakeholder meeting, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.



5 Insights from the local engagement

5.1 Global findings generally reflected experience of Tanzanian OPDs

OPD stakeholders broadly agreed that the barriers identified through the research were evident within Tanzania. Stakeholders described insufficient access to sustainable funding, limited provision for core organisational costs, inaccessible funding requirements, and funding arrangements that did not consistently recognise OPDs as equal partners. Several organisations welcomed the research as relevant and useful evidence base for influencing government, donors, and development partners.

5.2 Stakeholders identified several priorities requiring greater emphasis within the Tanzanian context

1. Improving the accessibility of funding processes

Funding opportunities are communicated and administered through online portals, which can exclude OPDs with limited access to reliable internet, digital equipment, or technical support; particularly in rural and underserved areas.

Organisations representing people with intellectual disabilities called for application materials and research recommendations to be made available in Easy Read and pictorial formats. Deaf stakeholders emphasised the need for public information to include sign language interpretation, with the associated costs planned and funded rather than treated as an afterthought.

2. Moving beyond short-term project funding to strengthen organisational sustainability



Stakeholders consistently validated that short-term project grants are not enough to build strong, sustainable OPDs; highlighting the importance of funding core operational costs, staff, governance, and organisational systems.

Some organisations proposed investment in income-generating initiatives, including activities in the agricultural sector, as one way of reducing reliance on external grants. Others called for government and development partners to support strategic livelihood and economic empowerment initiatives that could generate revenue for OPDs while also creating employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

3. Recognising OPDs as strategic partners in development

A strong theme across the discussions was the need for government and donors to recognise OPDs as partners in development, rather than as beneficiaries, critics, or recipients of charity.

Stakeholders emphasised that funding for disability inclusion should be grounded in rights and government obligations under the UNCRPD. One organisation observed that disability funding is sometimes framed as charitable assistance rather than as an investment in fulfilling the rights of persons with disabilities.

Stakeholders also highlighted that the experiences and knowledge of persons with disabilities are not always adequately documented or used to inform proposals and government policy. Stakeholders felt that decision-makers often place greater weight on externally generated academic evidence, even where OPDs hold detailed knowledge of the barriers faced by their communities. This can result in projects and policies that do not fully reflect local priorities or lived realities.

Stakeholders also reported that government institutions may at times view OPDs as opposition groups or critics, rather than as organisations that complement government efforts. Stakeholders called for stronger relationships based on mutual recognition, structured dialogue, and meaningful participation in policy, planning, and budgeting.



Some stakeholders proposed that persons with disabilities should be represented within donor governance and decision-making structures. This would help ensure that funding policies and decisions take account of lived experience and the priorities of disability communities.

4. Investing in organisational capacity of OPDs

Stakeholders did not place responsibility for funding barriers on donors and government alone. Some stakeholders also identified organisational challenges within the OPD sector, including gaps in financial management, record keeping, technical capacity, and compliance with donor requirements.

Stakeholders called for investment in capacity building for OPDs, including financial systems, governance, proposal development, resource mobilisation, and reporting. Stakeholders emphasized that this should be appropriately resourced and treated as part of sustainable funding, rather than as an expectation that OPDs must meet without investment.

Stakeholders also highlighted the value of stronger collaboration among OPDs. Some felt that organisations can be reluctant to form partnerships or consortia, even where joint working could strengthen proposals, expand expertise, and improve access to funding. Stakeholders therefore called for funding models that recognise the real costs of running an OPD and allow organisations to plan beyond short project cycles.

5.3 Local advocacy

TUSPO used the research to inform advocacy for stronger and more sustainable funding through the National Fund for Persons with Disabilities. During a meeting with the National Disability Advisory Council, the Council pledged to support TUSPO's participation in upcoming government budget planning processes at both district and regional levels. These processes are scheduled to begin in early November.



These meetings will aim to increase government funding for OPDs through the National Fund for Persons with Disabilities. Key issues for future engagement include the overall level of funding available to OPDs, the length and flexibility of grants, support for core organisational costs, the inclusion of accessibility and reasonable accommodation within funded budgets, and the involvement of OPDs in all disability-related policies, programmes, budgets, and decision-making processes.

The stakeholder engagement showed broad agreement across OPDs, while also highlighting barriers that affect particular constituencies. Government bodies, the National Disability Advisory Council, SHIVYAWATA (umbrella OPD group) and local OPDs, donors, as well as development partners all have a role to play in promoting more equitable funding systems, helping turn this evidence into a coordinated advocacy agenda.



6 Conclusion

Overall, this work demonstrates how global evidence can be strengthened through local contextualisation and OPD leadership to support more effective policy advocacy. Notably, this process has already contributed to discussions on government budget planning and engagement with key policy stakeholders. By bringing together organisations representing a wide range of disability groups, the engagement enabled TUSPO to contextualize global findings through the realities of the Tanzanian context, identify nationally relevant priorities, and build a stronger collective for advocacy.



7 References

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