ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Scaling of Organisations of Persons with Disabilities: A Case Study in the People's Democratic Republic of Lao

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: *The ability to have impact at scale is an important concern for Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), but little is known about how scaling occurs in practice and the capacity of OPDs to undertake scaling. The aim of this study was to assess perceptions and experiences of scaling and broader organisational practices among a sample of people working for OPDs in Lao PDR. The study also aimed to deductively analyse the qualitative data in relation to a pre-defined socially inclusive scaling framework.*

Methods: *In-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of people working with 10 OPDs operating in Lao PDR (n = 12; 6 female and 6 male). Participants included directors, administration personnel, and advisers of OPDs. Grounded theory was used to analyse the qualitative data. A deductive approach, comprising a multiple cycling coding process, was used to analyse the data in relation to the IPILA socially inclusive scaling framework.*

Results: *Participants reported their perceptions of scaling and broader organisational practices in relation to eight themes: OPDs' relationship with government; collaboration among OPDs; legal registration; operational challenges; good practices for success; different strategies across OPDs; next steps to improve the work of OPDs; and implementation of policies. Findings from the deductive analyses indicated that OPDs use different strategies to include their members and/or service-users. The OPDs scaled in different directions, despite facing operational challenges such as funding and technical expertise. While OPDs identified scaling practices, they react to rather than plan scaling opportunities.*

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Conclusion: This study addressed the ways in which scaling is understood by OPDs in the context of Lao PDR. The findings show that OPDs recognise their good practices and the steps needed to scale, but lack planning and monitoring processes for scaling.

Key words: Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), social inclusion, scaling, good practices, Lao PDR
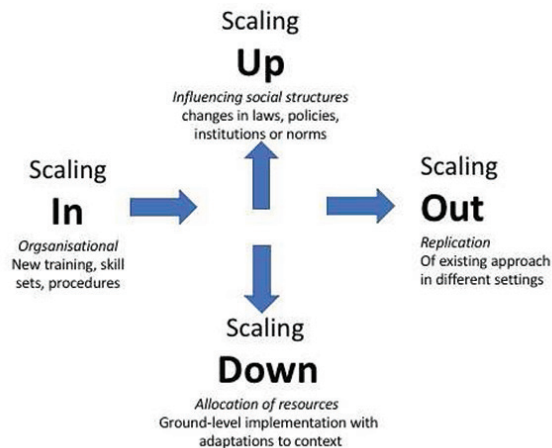
INTRODUCTION

Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) aim to implement and innovate good practices to fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities, and in so doing to promote their social inclusion. There are currently more than 20 different frameworks to guide scaling, which have recently been synthesised into an approach that is focused on social inclusion, and is therefore very relevant to challenges that face OPDs (Sánchez Rodríguez et al., 2020). Scaling often requires dissemination of ideas, transfer of methods, and improving the quality of interventions to increase the scale of impact (Binswanger & Aiyar, 2003; Hancock et al., 2003; Manor, 2007; Hartmann & Linn, 2008), and "doing it more reliably, more efficiently, and with a steady improvement in quality" (Seelos & Mair, 2016). In this paper, scaling is considered to be influencing, repeating, adapting, and ensuring social change for vulnerable populations, and in particular for persons with disabilities. Scaling for social change requires targeting harmful social norms, such as those that reinforce discrimination against persons with disabilities (Carter et al., 2018). Multiple forms of discrimination coexist within complex systems. Therefore, changing these systems often follows successive approximations or "the amplification of micro-level interactions" (Burns & Worsley, 2015) to produce macro-level changes in the settings and conditions in which people live (MacLachlan & McVeigh, 2021).

While there are multiple approaches to scaling, there are typically five phases in terms of process: identifying, planning, implementing, learning, and adapting - IPILA (Sánchez Rodríguez et al., 2020). More specifically, these phases include: 1) identifying an intervention (e.g. innovation, good practice, project, programme, and policy) (Jonasova & Cooke, 2012); 2) planning based on evidence-based good practice; 3) implementing the scaling plan using different strategies, depending on the scaling direction adopted (Weber et al., 2012); 4) learning and knowledge transfer (Taylor & Taylor, 2016); and 5) adapting to uncertainty and unpredictability (Sánchez Rodríguez et al., 2020). These five phases are schematically presented in Figure 1.
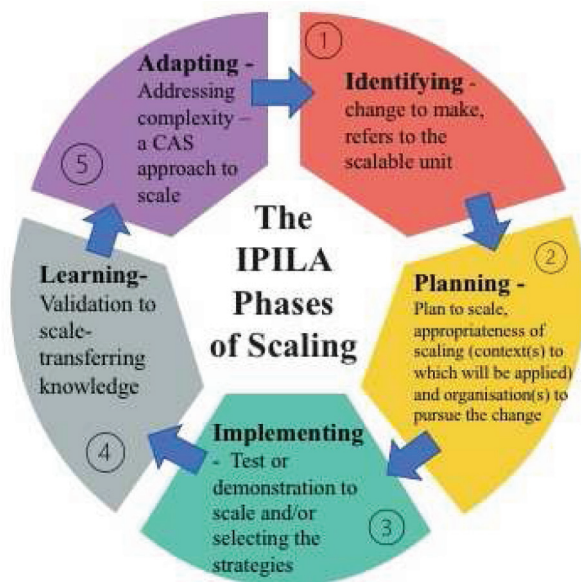
Scaling can also be distinguished in terms of directions. Four scaling directions were emergent from Sánchez Rodríguez et al.'s (2020) review and synthesis of the literature – 'scaling up', 'scaling down', 'scaling out', and 'scaling in' – with each direction having its own strategies and goals (see Figure 2). The 'scaling up' direction focuses on structural changes at institutional levels. In the 'scaling up' direction, the organisation implements strategies such as negotiating with policy-makers or building strong networks with stakeholders in order to advocate. The second direction is 'scaling out', where the organisation strives to broaden its scope geographically. 'Scaling out' implies replication by communicating and diffusing the practice. A third direction is 'scaling in', and its goal is to pursue change within the organisation. For example, this might be achieved by adding a component that contributes to the organisation's overall objective, giving it improved capacity to deliver on its mission. Finally, the 'scaling down' direction requires a better understanding of the needs of community-based organisations and devolving resources to reach out to communities.

Scaling **Up** — *Influencing social structures* changes in laws, policies, institutions or norms

Scaling **In** — *Orgsanisational* New training, skill sets, procedures

Scaling **Out** — *Replication* Of existing approach in different settings

Scaling **Down** — *Allocation of resources* Ground-level implementation with adaptations to context

While Sánchez Rodríguez et al. (2020) identified five phases for process and four directions for scaling, the inclusion of marginalised groups may be strengthened by following a number of complementary steps. First, an inclusive intervention must be identified, signifying "the development and implementation of new ideas (referring to innovation) which aspire to create opportunities that enhance social and economic well-being for disenfranchised members of society" (George et al., 2012), promoted through organisations whose main purposes are social (Mulgan, 2006). Second, activities must be planned and initiated with the community. Third, community participation can be reinforced in the process of change. Fourth, organisational learning must be incorporated that includes the ideas, perceptions, and opinions of the community. Finally, inclusive ideas, practices, or projects can be adapted to reflect the views of marginalised individuals or groups. These five steps can promote socially inclusive scaling to strengthen the ownership of OPDs. Analysing and understanding the context in which OPDs' interventions are implemented is also recommended. This framework for socially inclusive scaling is presented in Figure 3.
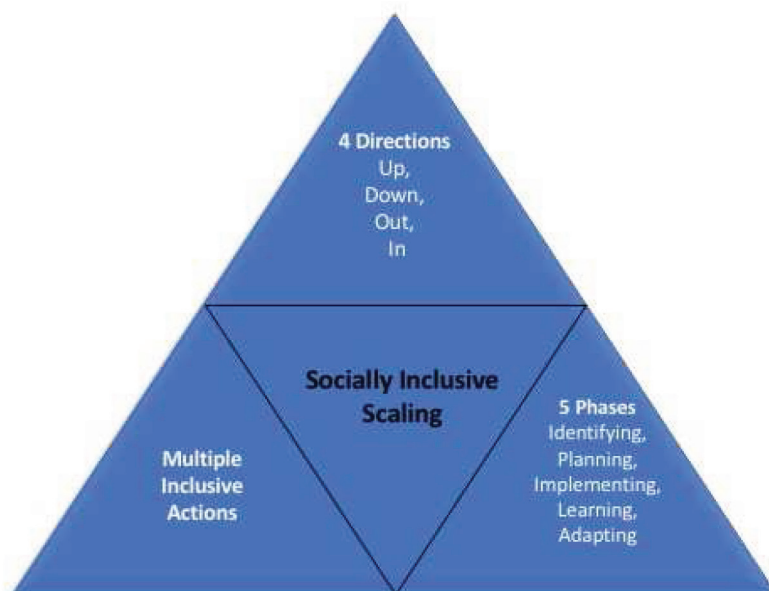
Lao PDR as a Case Study

Lao PDR, founded in 1975, is a low-income country, bordering Cambodia, China, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam (FAO et al., 2016). The country is divided into 18 provinces, with Vientiane as the capital city situated in the south (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2016). The country has a population of 7.1 million people including 50 ethnic groups, with two-thirds of citizens residing in rural areas (UN Lao PDR, 2019). According to the 2015 Population and Housing Census, disability prevalence is higher in rural areas – 2.5% in urban areas, 2.9% in rural areas with roads, and 3.3% in rural areas without roads (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2016). The most prevalent forms of disabilities include impairments related to seeing (1.3%) and walking or climbing stairs (1.3%), followed by hearing (1.2%), remembering or concentrating (1.2%), self-care (1.1%), and communicating (0.9%) (Lao Statistics Bureau, 2016). Disability is frequently stigmatised in the country (Thoresen et al., 2017) and viewed as bad luck. In some cases, families prioritise the needs of their healthier members with no disability (Buchner, 2011).

While the country has assented to several principal international human rights treaties, a key challenge is reducing inequities amongst marginalised groups. As proposed by the FAO et al. (2016):

"One of the main development challenges is ensuring that the benefits from high economic growth, averaging more than 7 percent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for the past five years, are evenly distributed and translated into inclusive and sustainable human development. Widening gaps between rich and poor, women and men, ethnic groups, and residents of different regions of the country need to be addressed".

Lao PDR was selected as a case study due to recent developments in the country towards the inclusion of marginalised groups, particularly persons with disabilities, including the expansion of OPDs. Lao PDR's first focus on disabilities was on casualties due to unexploded ordnance (UXO) from bombs dropped during the US-Vietnam war. The UXO caused 13,500 people to have disabilities between 1964 and 2008, and it continues to have an impact in the Lao population, claiming new victims even today (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017).

The Lao government has made progress in recognising the rights of persons with disabilities. In 2009, the government signed and ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The first Lao PDR initial report to the CRPD Committee also highlights the emergence of non-governmental organisations as a strategy to advance the rights of persons with disabilities (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017). Furthermore, the National Committee for Disabled People and the Elderly (NCDE) presented a Disability National Law that was enacted in 2019 by the General Assembly of Lao PDR, which specified the role of OPDs.

The first OPDs in Lao PDR began working in the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, it was not until 2009 that OPDs were officially recognised by the State under Decree no. 115 on Associations (Lao PDR Ministry of Industry and Commerce, 2009). The Decree no.115 was replaced in 2017 by the Decree no. 238 on Associations, which defined in Article 11 "social welfare and development associations" including those working with persons with disabilities (Lao PDR Ministry of Home Affairs, 2017). OPDs in the country are diverse in their scope, focus, and structure. They include parent-driven associations such as the Association for Autism (AfA) and the Intellectual Disability Association (IDA), and OPDs funded by groups of persons with a specific disability such as the Vocational Development for Blind Association (VDBA) and the Association for the Deaf (AFD). OPDs have registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs, enjoying more freedom to apply directly for funds and participate in government

meetings (Lao PDR Ministry of Home Affairs, 2017; Article 20). The AFD and the IDA (formerly known as the Intellectual Disability Unit) were sponsored by the Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA) to legally represent them. The Intellectual Disability Unit obtained its registration and in 2019 become the Intellectual Disability Association, no longer needing representation by the LDPA. While the LDPA has traditionally been considered an umbrella organisation, each organisation is independent and participates equally in the network. Appendix A provides a description of OPDs in LAO PDR, including the year that they were founded and/or registered, number of members/beneficiaries, area of influence, targeted disability population, and areas of work.

Most of the OPDs are based in the capital, Vientiane, with the exception of the AfA, LDPA, and the Quality of Life Association (QLA), which operate in other provinces. The national government's role for persons with disabilities has been limited and inconsistent, with OPDs implementing most initiatives for persons with disabilities such as rights promotion, income generation, and inclusive education. For example, OPDs organise teacher training for inclusive education, implement income generation activities such as cattle raising, provide transportation and promote sporting activities for persons with disabilities. Indeed, OPDs' good practices have been highlighted in projects by international non-governmental organisations to support OPDs, such as the "Sharing of Good Practices/Lessons Learnt" workshop organised in December 2018 with the support of Humanity and Inclusion (HI). In this workshop, the following good practices of OPDs were presented: the AfA's Lao Autism Talk app, developed with the support of a tech company; the Lao Blind Association's (LBA) and the VDBA's practice of registering blind students at the National University of Lao; and the QLA project to ensure access to primary and secondary school for persons with disabilities in Xieng Khouang Province. These good practices were recognised due to their potential to scale, in terms of increasing impact and accessing remote areas (Wardle & Phandanouvong, 2018).

Objective

The ability to have impact at scale is an important concern for OPDs. However, little is known about how scaling occurs in practice and the capacity of OPDs to undertake scaling. Previous literature focuses on the scaling of non-governmental organisations, without differentiating OPDs from other organisations, particularly in low- and middle-income countries (Guha, 2019).

In response to this gap in the literature, the aim of this study was to assess perceptions and experiences of scaling and broader organisational practices amongst a sample of people working for OPDs in Lao PDR. This study also aimed to deductively analyse the qualitative data in relation to the socially inclusive scaling framework outlined above. Using Lao PDR as a case study, we explored whether OPDs were scaling their practices and, if so, how scaling was signalled, by examining the scaling phases and the directions that OPDs might be taking.

METHOD

Setting

This study is part of a larger qualitative study conducted in Lao PDR from 2018 to 2019, in collaboration with HI.

Study Sample

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit a range of OPDs in Lao PDR. These OPDs were identified with the support of HI, who had been working with them to strengthen their practices. In-depth interviews were conducted with a sample of people working with 10 OPDs operating in the country (n = 12) (6 female and 6 male). Participants included directors, administration personnel, and advisers of OPDs.

Data Collection

In total, 16 interviews were conducted, with two participants present in three of the interviews. Eleven interviews were conducted in March 2018. Five follow-up interviews were subsequently conducted between November and December 2019, with OPDs that had reported scaling in the first interview. Three of these follow-up interviews were with the same participant.

Interviews were conducted at the venues of OPDs. While 13 interviews were recorded, 3 interviews were not, as participants did not consent to being recorded. Eight interviews were conducted in Lao language, using consecutive interpretation from Lao to English, and availing of a sign language interpreter when required. The field researcher recorded notes in a field notes diary, writing direct observations immediately after interviews to describe any additional information that was observed and interpreted (Deggs & Hernandez, 2018).

Study Tools

The primary researcher designed a 7-item interview schedule, which focused on general information about the interviewee and organisation, the organisation's relationships and networking, areas of expertise, practice presented and selected by HI-Making it Work, good practices, and scaling up. The interview guide focused on 'scaling up' as a general overarching term for all four scaling directions. The interview schedule is provided in Appendix B.

In addition to the in-depth interviews, a workshop was organised in May 2019 with 13 OPDs. The purpose of the workshop was to analyse the OPDs' good practices and to understand perceptions and experiences of scaling. The socially inclusive scaling framework was refined after the interviews were conducted, and the revised framework was presented at the workshop. The framework was also iteratively revised after the workshop. The workshop plan is provided in Appendix C. Scaling was translated and understood by respondents as improvement and expansion (*kanpabpung* and *kankhajaitua* – the Lao words to refer to improvement and expansion). The terminology that OPDs used to refer to scaling was developed further in the workshop, and included the concepts of improving, growing, continuing, planning, practicing, creating, and expanding.

Data Analyses

The primary researcher transcribed the data in full. Grounded theory was used to analyse the data (Glaser & Strauss, 2017). A deductive approach, comprising a multiple cycling coding process (Rossman & Rallis, 2012), was also used to analyse the data in relation to the IPILA socially inclusive scaling framework outlined above. In the first cycle, open coding was used to first analyse the content that emerged from the data. The second coding cycle rearranged the information by identifying codes related to the scaling phases described above. In the third and last cycle, sub-codes were created for strategies that pointed to each of the phases, and coding was applied through the lens of the five steps of a socially inclusive scaling approach, as outlined above.

Several mechanisms were used to strengthen the validity of the study. Data were collected from different sources for the purpose of data triangulation (Miles et al., 2020). For example, data from the field notes diary were used to provide information on the contextual settings of interviews. Member-checks were also conducted across OPDs, in collaboration with HI and Maynooth University advisors. Furthermore, follow-up interviews were conducted to examine the

accuracy of data, and to provide further clarification of information with HI Lao (Maxwell, 2013). Finally, the design of this qualitative research study required an immersion in the organisational environments of the OPDs at two time points, to explore the organisations, their context, and cultural nuances and differences amongst them and with their partner organisations (Ragin & Amoroso, 2011).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Maynooth University Social Research Ethics Subcommittee.

RESULTS

Emergent Themes

This section presents findings from the inductive analyses of the data using grounded theory. Participants reported their perceptions and experiences of scaling and broader organisational practices in relation to eight themes: OPDs' relationship with government; collaboration amongst OPDs; legal registration; operational challenges; good practices for success; different strategies across OPDs; next steps to improve the work of OPDs; and implementation of policies. Each of these themes is discussed in more detail below.

OPDs' Relationship with Government

Participants emphasised the importance of their relationship with government. All participants reported some form of collaboration with government, indicating that all 10 OPDs had a relationship with a government entity at the national or provincial level. For example, one participant communicated the need for OPD collaboration with the government, as follows:

> *"I think we have been working closely with the Ministry of Education to make inclusive education happen, to get them to agree to accept our children in primary school, secondary school. It is not really a big policy change because our government already has good policy right, but I think more than making more policy, it is putting into practice there we are not changing anything" (P10).*

Participants reported that OPDs' relationships with government were important, but sometimes challenging. For example, one participant communicated:

"So it is not easy as you know, especially for the government, especially for the ministry, to understand. So what we had to do is we had to do a lot of heavy work on advocacy" (P3).

Two participants mentioned the need to report to the government, and one participant mentioned the need to inform the government before receiving funding. As one participant remarked:

"Of course what we did, meaning the government, how do I say that we had monthly, yearly, report for the government as Ministry of Affairs and about whatever because we are under government legality, so whenever we have a programme or activity we need to inform them to know what we do, so that is why we have annual report for yearly, and we report for the government and ask permission every time of what we do" (P4).

Collaboration among OPDs

Participants reported that OPDs work together and meet quarterly. They asserted that collaboration among OPDs was important to amplify their voices. Two participants specifically mentioned the OPDs' network as a space for OPD collaboration. One participant stated:

"… but are not doing it ourselves alone you know. I think we also team up with other disability organisations so that the voice is louder, and we don't want to sort of, you know, do it alone" (P10).

Participants reported that OPDs exchange information and participate in activities organised by the group or independently. One participant commented:

"When we are making audio books or computer tutorials or something else, we have some meeting, and we invite OPDs to share ideas or to come with something else for our projects; and we have some good comments. We have a good network, we share how you say, when they have some organisations to call for funding, we join together sometimes" (P1).

The participants detailed how they participated in the activities of other OPDs. One participant explained:

"Always participating in other meetings with other OPDs every three months…. for example, if they have some activities, even other OPD has its own activities for example, some activities about the types of disabilities, the AFD will be

participating and also contributing in their role promoting their organisation with other OPDs" (P2).

Notably, one participant mentioned the support of HI to strengthen the network of OPDs:

"So our relationship is regularly exchanging information, especially in the quarterly meeting. This meeting is actually funded by HI and strengthens networking of OPDs; and in these meetings, we will discuss our own work in each organisation and also the plan of each organisation and the issues the organisation faces, and find ways to help one another" (P7).

Legal Registration

Participants reported that the OPDs were established before they were legally registered. However, the IDA, for example, was not registered at the time of the interviews, and the AFD has not achieved registration to date. Registration allows the organisations to be formally recognised by the State. As explained by two participants, registration also requires OPDs to periodically report their activities to the Ministry of Home Affairs. One participant asserted that the legal registration process was arduous, but important to achieve:

"So it was a long process that they stuck with, and now they are one of the few organisations that are registered and can tick one of the boxes, so that's a huge in policy a good example for civil society of how to work with government by being registered" (P9).

Operational Challenges

OPDs articulated multiple challenges in their work. The most common challenges were lack of technical and management expertise, alongside funding. However, participants reported other challenges such as lack of communication, awareness, their own space, expertise of their counterparts, and adequate materials. Eleven participants highlighted funding as a challenge, as exemplified by one participant's observation:

"We have to find a way to survive as an organisation, so it is a lot of effort to try to find money working with government, with donor government, to identify projects, to find a match in our interests and needs, and have the money to support our activities" (P10).

In relation to the challenges of funding and technical expertise, another participant emphasised:

"For the advocacy work he said that we wish to expand, but there are still so many challenges because most of this success of the advocacy work is based or under the project life span; and when the project finishes, everything stops. For example, we don't have enough funding or budget to run the project any more, and the person who used to be part of the advocacy is not there anymore, because we need more like a qualified person and that person has to be skilful and they have to know law and they have to know the legislation, a lot of things. They have to know everything in detail, but unfortunately we don't have that person anymore, and that's the challenge they have now in expanding their advocacy work" (P7).

Good Practices for Success

All of the participants could identify good practices in their OPD. One participant asserted that their OPD's good practices were recognised and had received an international award. Participants reported the following elements of success: government support of initiatives, accessibility to users, international recognition, and offering economic activities for self-employment to persons with disabilities. For example, in relation to good accessibility practices, one participant specified:

"So the reason why she chose this good practice is because everyone can access this application, even people who are far away from this training centre, and they don't have to travel here; and everyone can learn about this because it is a video demonstration" (P7).

Another participant commented on providing economic activities for self-employment to persons with disabilities:

"Because these activities are more like a living style of people, the way of living, especially the vulnerable people with disabilities, even the income is low, but still is good enough for them, and also cheers them up that they still have some income source" (P5).

Different Strategies across OPDs

Participants indicated that their practices and strategies were diverse. They reported, however, that common strategies across OPDs included: awareness

of the community, awareness of contextual differences, engagement with stakeholders, transferring skills, adapting new organisational models, developing an organisational model with the participation of members, adapting the model according to the needs of the group, and acknowledging and addressing specific needs. For example, one participant emphasised the importance of taking context into consideration:

> *"Every province has its own unique thing, and I don't want to sort of copy what we have in Vientiane everywhere. It has to fit the local context" (P10).*

Another participant discussed the development of an organisational model with the participation of OPD members:

> *"My strategies or my solution because every week we have like a good connection, like a discussion, like each unit they have their own plan, then we have a meeting, then we consider together. So for my idea I want to give independence to kind of disability under the same rules, you understand what I mean, we need to have independence because I am not the boss, I am just a leader, but you must become a leader and lead your team. That is my idea" (P12).*

One participant emphasised the importance of acknowledging specific needs and addressing them by asking service-users first:

> *"We discussed the first steps after we asked that person and family. We need to ask that person. We ask, 'what do you need and how can we help you?'" (P8).*

Next Steps to Improve the Work of OPDs

All participants outlined steps to improve their work. Ten participants, across nine OPDs, mentioned plans to expand their OPD. For instance, one participant reported:

> *"We are in an expanding phase … I believe to be in a successful expansion we need to be at core a core team" (P10).*

Similarly, another participant asserted:

> *"Of course, we are trying to grow up and what is our motto? 'Nothing about us without us.' I am trying to promote the young generation of all kinds of disabilities to respond to their own disability; we are trying to establish like a unit" (P12).*

One participant referred to fundraising and advocacy to attract donors and other organisations to invest in the OPD's programmes:

"First thing you have to do is to do a fundraising first to interest donors and organisations. What we have to do is a lot of advocacy to attract their attention to invest in our programmes" (P3).
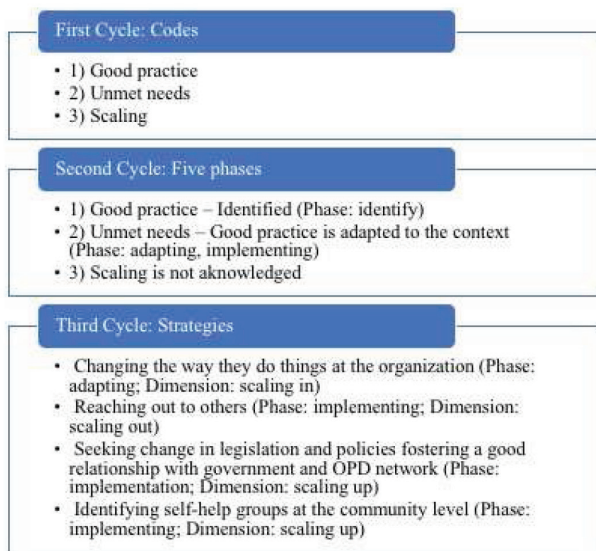
Implementation of Policies

Three participants stated that policies had been developed for persons with disabilities in Lao PDR, but were not fully implemented. As one participant suggested:

"…in Lao, we have a lot of things, very nice legislation and policy, but not really implementing" (P12).

Two participants discussed the development of a policy framework on inclusive education, which had not been implemented. One participant asserted that national policies did not focus on persons with intellectual disabilities.

Socially Inclusive Scaling Framework

This section presents findings from the deductive multiple cycling coding process used to analyse the data in relation to the socially inclusive scaling framework. Figure 4 presents general themes that emerged from the three stages of the cycling coding process.

First Cycle: Codes
- 1) Good practice
- 2) Unmet needs
- 3) Scaling

Second Cycle: Five phases
- 1) Good practice – Identified (Phase: identify)
- 2) Unmet needs – Good practice is adapted to the context (Phase: adapting, implementing)
- 3) Scaling is not aknowledged

Third Cycle: Strategies
- Changing the way they do things at the organization (Phase: adapting; Dimension: scaling in)
- Reaching out to others (Phase: implementing; Dimension: scaling out)
- Seeking change in legislation and policies fostering a good relationship with government and OPD network (Phase: implementation; Dimension: scaling up)
- Identifying self-help groups at the community level (Phase: implementing; Dimension: scaling up)

Participants selected and highlighted the successes of their work. None of the participants reported having scaled as such, and yet all addressed interventions and innovations that had been expanded or replicated in some way. OPDs are not necessarily pursuing scaling in a systematic way, for instance using all the five phases in the process. This is particularly so in the planning phase. New activities result more from seizing an opportunity, such as new funding or support from interest groups. The study findings are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Socially Inclusive Scaling Framework and Findings from Interviews

Scaling Phase	Definition of the Phase in Socially Inclusive Scaling	Findings from Interviews	Examples	Participant Quotes
Identify an inclusive practice.	Identifying the intervention, and with it the scaling direction that the organisation will pursue. In socially inclusive scaling, the focus is on how the intervention is creating changes and opportunities for persons with disabilities.	1) There is no confusion or hesitation in identifying their own good practice, provided that there is internal and external recognition of the practice. 2) There is no overlapping of good practices/interventions amongst organisations. Each organisation is focusing on their own practice, and their practice is unique for their service-users. 3) Interventions are fit to purpose and to the target population. Moreover, *good practices* refer to successful interventions that are accessible to the population they serve.	1) External recognition and awards by national and international organisations (e.g., AfA, AFD). Internal recognition of single or multiple successful practices, such as the Disability Rights Empowerment Training (DRET). 2) AFD practices include "Hand Me" and "Hand Talk", which are a series of videos on Lao sign language for people with hearing impairments. AfA has the Lao Autism Talk app, which is focused on the needs of persons with autism and intellectual disability. 3) AFD mentions that the app is relatively easy to use and accessible for all people.	*"We won three awards. We won ICT award when we launched; and then the Ministry of Communication sent our app to ASEAN, so we won the civil award under the social corporate responsibility. You know, they have different categories, 6 categories. We won the second award of the social corporate responsibility because of the impact of the app…"* (AfA director, personal communication, March 2018).
Planning scaling.	The scaling planning process requires an analysis of what is feasible and collecting evidence of what has worked, including steps and strategies. In socially inclusive scaling, the planning process and plan is built and shared with the communities.	1) No planning or limited planning according to the resources available. This phase overlaps with adapting. 2) The OPDs do not have a formal planning process to scale and a written scaling plan. However, all of the OPDs are cognisant of the next steps to scale. AfA is the only OPD that addressed scaling in its strategic plan structure.	1) AfA's app works on an Android system. A second phase was planned to develop the app for an IOS system, but the OPD did not have the necessary funds. 2) AFD is calling for the government to provide sign interpreters at all public events. AfA is advocating for the State to provide teacher training and to introduce inclusive education in all schools, not only in the Vientiane capital. AfA's Strategic Plan 2012–2020 highlights the expansion of their education centre.	*"So in the future as today, she is planning to expand the community of the sign language, especially to rural areas and also to other provinces, and also do some [inaudible] working in schools and other organisations, even inside the country and outside the country, and also building a networking through the countries"* (AFD director, personal communication, March 2018).

		3) Planning takes place collectively at the OPDs' network meetings, including planning to scale up to influence change.	3) Sharing planning with the OPD network to support their actions and joint efforts to obtain funding.	
Implement actions to scale.	Resource mobilisation and the organisation investing for scaling. Socially inclusive scaling will comprise design feedback mechanisms that are sensitive to and capable of reinforcing community participation.	1) A *gradual approach* to scaling, according to the opportunities that arise (the momentum), e.g., funding opportunities or by request from interest groups. 2) OPDs stated that they received feedback from their service-users. 3) OPDs simultaneously plan and implement scaling. Implementing scaling is a spontaneous process; it is not pre-planned (Edwards & Hulme, 1992; Hartmann & Linn, 2007). However, this stage implies using a variety of strategies.	1) AfA expanded to Pakse (scaling out), initially by request of a group of parents. LBA first approached the Ministry of Education to include blind students at the National University of Lao. 2) LBA getting feedback from the blind students at the National University of Lao and AfA from the users of the Lao Autism Talk. 3) AFD, for example, expressed interest to expand their actions by approaching rural communities.	*"Hasn't been a formal branch yet, so we found a group of parents. We cannot set up the centre because this group of parents can't pay the fee, so we need at least ten parents who can pay the fee to set up the centre, so these parents can't, so we can't set up the centre; but we are planning to engage parents to get to know one another more and maybe having a group session maybe once a month to sort of get to know one another, to have an activity together. We don't have to have a centre, but get the activity going, so I want I am aiming to work with the father leader"* (AfA director, personal communication, November 2018).
Learning lessons.	Knowledge transfer-related scaling from the organisation. In socially inclusive scaling, the learning phase is a space to reflect without stopping implementation and should overlap with it.	1) Learning has led some of the OPDs to scale out – there are limited examples of other types of scaling. OPDs that have replicated in some way have adapted their intervention. 2) OPDs' feedback processes are not formalised. In most cases, feedback processes are confined to external evaluations when there is international funding. However, OPDs are required to provide regular reports to the government, but it is unclear if this leads to an analysis of lessons learnt. 3) Feedback is obtained by comparing other experiences elsewhere. OPDs are learning from counterparts in other countries.	1) AfA pays attention to strengthening the organisation and explains to their staff what is expected of them (defining people's roles at the central and provincial levels). 2) A rare example of OPDs' evaluation processes is QLA, which has a mid-term or quarterly evaluation depending on the nature of the project, to make necessary changes to improve the project. However, this is a regular practice, not necessarily in the context of scaling. (3) LBA has exchanges with Thailand counterparts that come to Lao PDR to train staff in the National University of Lao on the use of assistive products, such as voice programmes for students who are blind.	*"The plan is not to expand, but to update what we have now first, because the programme itself has not functioned 100% yet. It is not 100% like English voice programme; but now we are working with Thailand, the people in Thailand, to help us to update the programmes to become 100% functional"* (President of LBA, personal communication, March 2018).

Adapting practices.	Linked to the learning process, adapting aims to address complexity and nuances of the context. This phase highlights the lack of linearity of the scaling process, as the phases overlap. In socially inclusive scaling, it requires the participation of constituents to address change and any uncertainties.	1) The organisations adapt to address needs in other contexts, such as adapting operating procedures or tailoring projects according to the communities' demands. 2) OPDs accommodate different strategies to achieve their mission.	1) LDPA branches have different programming to the LDPA central office in the Vientiane capital. The AfA model transfer (scaling out) to Pakse has involved adaptations such as the reduction and/or waiving of school fees, and a different organisational operational structure (more flexible, combining roles and responsibilities due to the low number of staff). When QLA replicates in other provinces and districts, it addresses specific concerns and addresses those needs in the projects. 2) Adapting to deliver better results, such as adapting the contents of a training programme to other audiences in the case of LDPA-DRET training.	*"We found one case in Kham district. That person, she is around 13 years old and then she would like to go to school very much, but she couldn't have access to school; and then you know many times when we try to help this person and try to get her to the school, it was very difficult because that person she couldn't walk. She was in a wheelchair, so I need to manage this case you know, because I would like to ask QLA to follow like what I am doing to help people like this. And when we discussed first steps that we need to ask, that persons no family, we need to ask that person. We ask what you need and how we can help you, so that she is will like to school, but the problem is that I can't access the school"* (Director of QLA, personal communication, March 2018).

Some practices that were identified might not be overtly innovative. However, OPDs such as the Lao Disabled Women's Development Centre (LDWDC) identified its good practice as innovative because they were first to implement a programme for vocational training for women with disabilities (P4). LDWDC is the only organisation working for women with disabilities since 2001, as recalled by one of their staff members (P4). Moreover, identifying a practice becomes a process of ownership. For example, the LDPA reclaims as theirs the DRET from Power International (a former charity based in the UK); DRET is a programme to raise awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities (P7). Indeed, OPDs recognise their own practices and successes because they are able to judge their benefits; such as the benefit of introducing voice programmes in computers at the National University of Lao to provide accessible information to persons who are blind (P3).

As presented in Table 2, it is evident that scaling has happened or is happening. Some OPDs' practices are currently being scaled, as there are indications that the practices that were piloted are expanding, such as the QLA's Persons with disability Inclusive Committees (PICs). PICs are district committees with representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, which are organised to support persons with disabilities (P8). PICs work to improve efficiency and coordination

amongst district and provincial authorities. The QLA's project began by establishing one PIC and, within a year, PICs were established in five districts. At the same time, AfA has expanded their model in other provinces, without realising that this constitutes scaling (P10). AfA has a centre for children with autism, founded in Vientiane in 2009. In 2017, AfA expanded to Pakse district in Champasak Province. The scaling process is supported by the strong leadership of the AfA director and Board of Directors. The AfA director has supported parents in other provinces to start their centre, following the approach of the centre in Vientiane (P10). Another example of scaling is the work of LBA and VDBA in supporting blind students and negotiating an inclusive model at the National University of Lao, where they have reportedly increased the number of students every year since they started (P1).

OPDs are aware of what is needed for their organisations to scale (OPDs' Workshop, May 24, 2019). Most mentioned technical expertise. While there is a lack of training, new issues emerge that need to be addressed, which require learning and training (P8). OPDs have also taken 'adapting' into consideration, such as LBA's plan to update voice software to use it for different interfaces such as smartphones (P3).

Scaling is a concern for all OPDs. Planning is one of the weakest points addressed by the participants at the workshop, and funding is highlighted as a major problem (OPDs' Workshop, May 24, 2019). Furthermore, as they are occupied in their day-to-day operations, OPDs are struggling with documenting their projects, programmes and policies; they also require guidance on how to do this. It would be useful to document how they have been implementing projects on the ground, to understand their model and to inform their strategic planning (P10).

OPDs use different strategies to increase the impact of their work, which overlap across the planning, implementation and adapting scaling phases (Table 2). One example is inviting the Lao PDR government (Ministry of Education and Sports) to participate in study tours in other countries such as Thailand. As contended by the president of LBA, the government may then be more receptive to experiences in similar contexts and willing to invest in adapting practices. Although OPDs are not formally planning to scale, the study findings indicate that the OPD network is providing a platform to promote OPD activities. The OPD network advocates for disability rights at the national and regional levels in South-East Asian countries (P1).

DISCUSSION

The results show eight emergent themes from the data. OPDs seek government support to implement their activities. Legal registration is important for OPDs, and OPDs who have not obtained registration are trying to do so. OPDs' operational challenges can also influence the scaling process as potential facilitators or barriers. Participants recognised that partnering with other OPDs supports them in advancing their agenda. When policy implementation is lacking, this could be one of their priorities.

Participants indicated that their OPDs were scaling, although they did not appear to plan or document how such scaling happens. To inform their scaling practices, OPDs therefore require a systematic approach that sets out specific steps to scaling. Although OPDs' practices were related to particular scaling phases, participants did not view this as scaling. While OPDs do not appear to have a formal scaling plan, the OPD directors who were interviewed acknowledged what was required in terms of improvement and expansion, as well as their limitations. For example, the director of AFD reported that their plan was to expand to other communities and receive training in Lao sign language, especially in rural areas, by working in schools and with other organisations (AFD director, personal communication, March 2018).

In relation to implementing scaling of OPDs' good practices, participants' accounts were fragmented and undocumented. However, AfA is an example of scaling implementation, whereby the centre in Pakse demonstrates that scaling is being implemented by a group of parents trained by the Vientiane centre. LDPA is another example of scaling implementation by replicating their branches in other provinces; but as they have grown, they have lost proximity with their community members as they are represented through the branch's Boards (LDPA Annual Meeting, December 2018). OPDs that have gone through incipient scaling have adapted their interventions according to the context. As the AfA director relates:

> *"Every province has their own unique thing and I don't want to sort of copy what we have in Vientiane everywhere" (personal communication, November, 2018).*

In the five stages of scaling, the need to include the results of previous interventions in the planning process is emphasised, as an ongoing learning process. However, it is uncertain how OPDs are managing knowledge-transfer, such as AfA's

replication of their centre in other provinces. OPDs have learning tools such as surveys and evaluation questionnaires, but not for the scaling process. External evaluators used some of these tools to evaluate OPDs' performance and report back to the funder. The evaluation tools at the end of a project follow up the initial indicators in the funding proposal, some being rather ambitious such as contributing to the National Social and Economic Development Goals, and others being modestly related to OPDs' initiatives such as improving teacher training at the autism centre (Wardle & Phandanouvong, 2018).

Overall, OPDs' scaling practices are more a spontaneous response to current needs than planned scaling within the five-phases scaling framework. In this context, OPDs' good practices are scaling in the four directions of the framework, but are unrecognised as scaling. Indeed, examples of each of the four directions were found: scaling up – influencing institutional change (e.g., OPDs' network and their influence in the drafting of the disability law); scaling out – replicating and expanding (e.g., replication in the AfA Vientiane centre in Pakse and the QLA-PICs in other districts); scaling in – strengthening OPDs (e.g., IDU becoming IDA, registering as an independent association); and scaling down – allocating resources at the community level (e.g., LDPA allocating resources to self-help groups).

Furthermore, it was found that scaling directions overlap. For example, the expansion of AfA to other provinces (scaling out) led to a governance structure to operate in Pakse and Vientiane (scaling in). The LBA is another example of the overlap of scaling directions, where the organisation is raising awareness with the community to scale up, advocating for adequate services for students who are blind, and scaling out to address other disabilities and departments at the university. However, the organisation understands that in order to scale out, they need better infrastructure and communication within other departments at the university beyond the English department (P1).

OPDs are therefore scaling in different overlapping directions. Importantly, however, further research is needed in relation to OPDs' choice of strategies and the outcomes depending on the scaling direction taken, and considering that one scaling direction may lead to overlapping scaling directions. Despite the scaling examples provided, these OPDs' good practices are unnoticed by other organisations, as OPDs are not documenting the steps taken and improvements made. Participants communicated how their OPD was expanding. For example, the president of LBA explained in relation to their success:

"First thing you have to do is to do a fundraising. First to interest donors and organisations, what we have to do is a lot of advocacy to attract their attention to invest in our programmes especially for the blind to access education and second to teach the blind to know how to use the computers because there are a lot of blind that still can't use the computers. And after that we can teach them how to access information and after they know how to access information they can go to school or to university" (P3).

Although participants did not recollect a planned scaling process for the OPDs' good practices, it is clear that OPDs recognised what was needed to scale. When asked how they would scale their sports activities, one of the OPD directors specified:

"By bringing other children from poor regions, mainstreaming disability in the schools, go to the communities".

This participant then described the steps:

"First, finding the statistics of children and young people with disabilities in the different districts, going to the government district to the welfare office because they have the numbers, then to the school, then organising a campaign that provides information, then organising the activities" (P6).

The findings have shown that OPDs indicate scaling in their practices, but do not use systematic planning processes for scaling. Furthermore, OPDs are inclusive of their members and non-members, including persons with disabilities. However, little evidence was found as to how they do this. The OPD network guarantees the involvement of OPDs and all their members, due to the relatively manageable membership size. However, a predicted growth in the number of OPDs will transform the network space, which should be considered for further studies.

Limitations

The results of this study derive from OPDs in one context. Furthermore, a large representative sample was not used for this study. It is therefore important to caution against generalising findings from this study to other contexts, in light of there being a wide diversity of OPDs, policies, and practices. Nonetheless, little is known about how scaling occurs in practice and the capacity of OPDs to undertake scaling, particularly using qualitative methods. This research has aimed to address this gap in the literature.

Challenges of the study also included the language barrier between the interviewer and the participants. However, attention was given by the researcher to other participant cues and the context in which the interviews were conducted. For example, all of the interviews were conducted in the OPDs' venues, followed by a tour to appreciate their work.

CONCLUSION

A good understanding of how to scale would facilitate OPDs in expanding their projects to other geographical areas and in advocating for the government to adopt projects after international funding ends. This research shows that OPDs are implementing good practices that need to be diffused and scaled purposely and systematically. However, for OPDs, it is a continuous struggle to significantly influence policies and deliver services to more persons with disabilities. Scaling requires the organisation to invest resources that they simply do not have.

Due to the specific context of Lao PDR, OPDs' projects are tied to international donors, their funding is not diversified, although their actions are controlled by the government. Moreover, scaling involves engagement with multiple stakeholders, including other organisations, government, and international non-governmental organisations. Scaling is therefore challenging for OPDs. OPDs may be aware that they are following a path to scale and acknowledge their own good practices, but they have difficulty in systematically planning to scale.

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Appendix A

OPDs in Lao PDR

Name of Organisation	Year Founded and/or Registered	Members/ Beneficiaries	Female Members/ Beneficiaries	Area of Influence	Targeted Disability Population	Areas of Work
Association for Autism (AfA)	2012 (year registered)	88	18	Vientiane and Pakse	Children with autism	Inclusive education
Association for the Deaf (AFD)	2013 (year founded)	2,914	1,160	Vientiane	Persons with hearing impairments	Rights promotion
Lao Disabled People's Association (LDPA)	2011 (year registered)	13,393	9,116	Vientiane and provinces	All disabilities	Rights promotion and income generation
Lao Blind Association (LBA)	2012 (year registered)	75	38	Vientiane	Persons with visual impairments	Inclusive education
Lao Disabled Women's Development Centre (LDWDC)	1990 (year founded)	945	930	Vientiane	Women with disabilities, particularly physical disabilities	Income generation
Quality of Life Association (QLA)	N.D.	N.D.	N.D.	Xiang and Hoang	All disabilities	Income generation, health, rehabilitation, service referrals,
Saysetha District for Disabled People Association (SDDPA)	2014 (year registered)	687	126	Vientiane	All disabilities	and income generation
Intellectual Disability Unit* (IDU)	2008 (year founded)	135	54	Vientiane	Children with intellectual disabilities	Inclusive education
Vocational Development for Blind Association (VDBA)	N.D.	N.D.	N.D.	Vientiane	Persons with visual impairments	Inclusive education

*In 2019, the OPD became the Intellectual Disability Association, receiving its own registration.

Source: Presentation at the Third Disability Forum, March 2018, and personal communication with OPDs' directors (2018-2019).

Appendix B

Interview Schedule for OPDs

Areas to cover:

- General information about the interviewee (years working in the organisation and role)

- General information about the organisation (year founded, mission, and vision)

- Organisation's relationships and networking (relationship with other organisations, communities, government, funders, and others)

- Areas of expertise (main projects, and those related to women and girls with disabilities, geographical areas covered)

- Practice presented and selected by HI-Making it Work (description and success)

- Identifying good practices that are particularly related to working with women and girls with disabilities (criteria to select good practices)

- Follow-up questions on scaling up (using data from the first round of interviews, ask follow-up questions about challenges and useful resources for scaling up practices)

Interview guide:

1. Demographics:

   - How long have you been working in the organisation?

   - What are your main responsibilities?

2. Background of organisation:

   - When and why was the organisation founded?

   - What is the mission of the organisation?

   - What are their main projects?

   - How is the organisation's engagement in policy-making processes? What are the contacts with policy-making processes? How do you contribute?

- What is the relationship with other stakeholders? Other organisations?

- What is the relationship with the government?

3. Good practice:

- How do you describe the organisation's good practice?

- What makes your practice a good one?

4. Scaling up:

• How are you planning to scale up your practice? Or what are the steps that you have followed to scale up your practice?

- What do you think will need to happen for the scale up to be successful?

• What would you see yourself using to scale up from what you learnt in this workshop?

Appendix C

Workshop Plan

Objectives for the OPDs

OPDs' good practices:

1. OPDs recall their good practices and recognise what made them successful

2. Identify strategies employed that were useful to the success of the practice

3. Identify the changes produced – anecdotally or through story-telling

OPDs scaling their good practice:

1. Understanding what scaling is and how it is conceptualised in their context

2. Identify the scaling dimensions and how these occur in their organisation

3. Identify actions that have unintentionally led to scaling their good practice

Agenda:

Activity	Purpose and Description
Introductions – explaining the purpose of the workshop, and providing a quick summary of the status of the research project.	Ensuring that everyone knows who is in the room and what we learnt from everyone's expectations.
Part 1. Revisiting the good practice – work in teams and choose one to present (2 to 3 groups).	Recalling good practice. Each organisation will describe their practice to the other team members: 1. Briefly describe your practice and recall the objective. 2. In what terms was your practice targeting persons with disabilities to strengthen their inclusion? 3. What makes your practice a good one? 4. Have you developed or improved your practice? How? 5. Tell a story of your practice success.
BREAK	
Part 2. Understanding scaling and the scaling process.	Discussing the scaling dimensions, and recognising the types of scaling that my organisation is implementing. In what ways is my organisation scaling and, if not, my practice?

Part 3. Briefly explaining components of a scaling plan.	How are you planning to scale up your practice? Or what are the steps that you have followed to scale up your practice? What do you think is needed for the scale up to be successful?
Conclusions.	Workshop evaluation: 1. Did you find the workshop useful for your organisation's work? 2. What could be improved? 3. Are you interested in a second workshop to follow up the work that we did here? 4. What would be important for you to learn specifically on scaling?
END OF WORKSHOP	