
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DRF LEARNING EVALUATION



Yumi Sera
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Acronyms

DPO	Disabled Persons Organization
DRAF	Disability Rights Advocacy Fund
DRF	Disability Rights Fund
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UN CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Preface

The Disability Rights Fund (DRF) is a grantmaking collaborative that empowers persons with disabilities to advocate for equal rights and full participation in society. Fueled by the momentum of the landmark 2008 U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), DRF supports organizations of persons with disabilities in developing countries to advance their rights.

This summary synthesizes and provides highlights from an external and independent learning evaluation of the Disability Rights Fund that was conducted by Universalia, a management consulting firm that focuses on monitoring and evaluation. The evaluation was finalized in March 2015. Building on a previous evaluation by Universalia, the evaluation focused on the period April 2012 to September 2014 and on five countries: Bangladesh, Ghana, Indonesia, Peru, and Uganda. The evaluation applied utilization-focused, participatory, and human rights based approaches. It used the Fund's monitoring system to assess the Fund's effectiveness and progress towards impact. A reference group of experts in evaluation provided feedback during the process. The Universalia evaluation team consulted 149 individuals, including Fund staff, board members, Global Advisory Panel members, donors, disability activists, grantees, and government representatives. The process included field missions in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Uganda; telephone interviews of key stakeholders in Ghana and Peru; and a desk review.

This summary also includes graphics and additional information from DRF to provide context and next steps as a response to the evaluation. The full evaluation is available upon request and posted on the Website.

DRF acknowledges and appreciates the hard work and collaboration of the Universalia team members, Elisabetta Micaro, Sandra Nduwimfiura, Dr. Charles Lusthaus, and external advisor, Dr. Futsum Abbay.

1. Grantees describe DRF

During the evaluation process, grantees and advisors described the Disability Rights Fund (DRF) as: fair, friendly, understanding, a promoter of the CRPD and of DPOs, sincere, motivating, helpful, flexible, inspiring, meaningful, consultative, a supporter, an advocate, a redeemer, accessible, responsive, and quality. (Below is a visual with these words)



2. DRF advocates to *leave no one behind*

Persons with disabilities are systematically excluded from participation in decision-making and, more broadly, in social development in all countries around the world. Because of their disabilities, PWDs in developing countries are often isolated and highly dependent on their family. This makes them more vulnerable to multiple forms of discrimination and exploitation, such as:

- Women with disabilities experience violence at a significantly higher rate than other women
- PWDs face much greater barriers in gaining livelihoods than others, including access to social protection, education, health care, and in particular sexual, reproductive and neonatal healthcare
- PWDs are more exposed to natural or man-made disasters [such as those related to climate change and extreme climate events]

According to the WHO/World Bank 2012 *World Report on Disability*:

- One in five people living under US\$1 a day has a disability
- PWDs are over-represented amongst the persistently poor and are less likely than others to be able to move themselves out of poverty

DRF and its grantees seek to give visibility and voice to persons with disabilities so as to *leave no one behind* as countries and the international community start to work towards the new Sustainable Development Goals.

DRF's greatest contribution lies in increasing the visibility of marginalized groups within the larger disability and human rights movements. Among the most excluded groups that DRF has supported are indigenous persons with disabilities, women with disabilities, persons with intellectual disabilities, and persons with psychosocial disabilities.

3. Grantees make progress towards achieving the rights of persons with disabilities

DRF has contributed significantly to the harmonization of national and local legislation with the CRPD, by enabling the active participation of grantees and other DPOs in legislative advocacy processes. As in any advocacy effort, there are, of course, a myriad of factors that lead to wins or setbacks. Champions in government are also critical to achieving the rights of persons with disabilities at policy levels. *The box below provides cumulative results data from 2008 through early 2015.*

Progress towards Results

From 2008 through June 2015, the Disability Rights Fund and its sister fund, the Disability Rights Advocacy Fund, have distributed USD 15,541,758 through 701 small-modest grants to 257 different DPOs, including 33 organizations of WWDs, in 32 countries. These grants, and technical assistance and movement-building support, have contributed to the following:

- 19 CRPD ratifications, 11 Optional Protocol ratifications; CRPD signature achieved in Fiji, and FSM (intent to ratify); Interpretative declaration on Article 12 removed in Mexico;
- 6 target countries with formal DPO participation in government CRPD mechanisms;
- 12 target countries with national legislative changes addressing rights of PWDs (Bangladesh, Fiji, Ghana, Haiti, Indonesia, Malawi, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Uganda, Ukraine, Vanuatu) including new Disability Acts in Bangladesh, Haiti, Malawi, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, Ukraine;
- 78 national level legislative, policy, program changes secured or underway with grantee input;
- 55 local level legislative, policy, program changes secured or underway with grantee input;
- 5 State reports submitted to the CRPD Committee, 3 Alternative reports, 1 Independent report;
- 9 reports with DRF grantee input to other UN human rights mechanisms;
- 265 grants to marginalized groups within disability community;
- 87 grants to new organizations representing groups of PWDs not previously active in public realm;
- All DRF-funded alternative reports to the CRPD Committee reflected interests of marginalized sectors of disability community;
- 178 grants to partnerships among DPOs and between DPOs and other civil society groups;
- Average increase of 21% in capacity for advocacy activities over past year, self-reported;
- Average increase of 21% in CRPD knowledge over past year, self-reported.

Data from the Disability Rights Fund

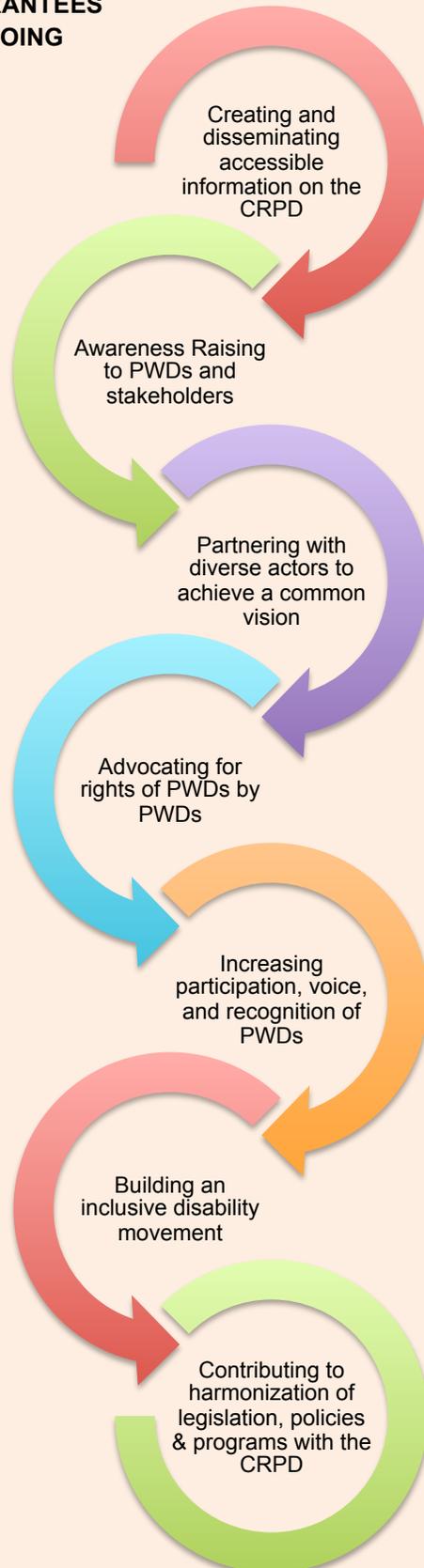
DRF grantees are engaged in diverse advocacy activities to enhance the participation of Disabled Persons Organizations in the achievement of rights. These activities are described in the diagram on the next page with the text for the diagram (for screen readers) below.

What grantees are doing and saying about results:

- Creating and disseminating accessible information on the CRPD
 - "Due to increased awareness on the UN CRPD, PWDs are now able to claim their rights. They claim access to government allowances, scholarships, allocation of PWD seats on buses, access to health services, education, schools, etc. This is only possible now because of the increased awareness of PWDs and government representatives." (Bangladesh)
- Awareness Raising to PWDs and stakeholders
 - "As a result of DRF funding and awareness activities, grantees have increased access to local government and elected representatives. Due to our knowledge and the awareness programs conducted at local levels, some DPOs are now invited to participate and provide feedback in local matters." (Bangladesh)
- Partnering with diverse actors to achieve a common vision
- Advocating for rights of PWDs by PWDs
 - "With DRF, there has been a change in trends of those claiming rights. Before, the trend consisted of non-disabled persons advocating for PWDs. Now it is PWDs advocating for PWDs." (Bangladesh)
- Increasing participation, voice, and recognition of PWDs
 - "Before DRF funding, we were not recognized by the government, but now they are changing... when there are programs, they always consult our organization for disability issues." (Indonesia)
- Building an inclusive disability movement
 - "It was very important that DRF funded organizations with experience, as well as others that are new like ASUMEN." [The Association of Mental Health Users is an emergent DPO in a poverty area of Lima] (Peru)
- Contributing to harmonization of legislation, policies & programs with the CRPD
 - DRF grantees have been involved in consultations and drafting of local legislation, including a bill to address accessibility needs of PWDs at the district level. (Uganda)

WHAT GRANTEES ARE DOING

WHAT GRANTEES ARE SAYING ABOUT RESULTS



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• "It was very important that DRF funded organizations with experience, as well as others that are new like ASUMEN." [The Association of Mental Health Users is an emergent DPO in a poverty area of Lima] (Peru)

• DRF grantees have been involved in consultations and drafting of local legislation, including a bill to address accessibility needs of PWDs at the district level. (Uganda)

4. Evaluation Findings

DRF is one of the few – and in some cases, the only – funders of advocacy for disability rights in the countries where it works. For bilateral aid agencies, a relationship with DRF helps ensure that international cooperation is inclusive of and accessible to persons with disabilities, as required under Article 32 of the CRPD.

DRF's comparative advantage is its ability to support representative organizations of persons with disabilities (DPOs) – the majority of which are small and grassroots. These organizations constitute the main social force fighting for the rights of persons with disabilities. As noted by evaluators, efforts to promote the rights of PWDs are predominantly undertaken by the disability movement, with very limited interventions or effort from other human rights movements or actors.

As such, DRF is recognized as an important contributor to achieving key results for PWDs at the country level. DRF grantmaking has enabled DPOs to become credible interlocutors and counterparts to government authorities, and to play the key role of keeping governments accountable to the implementation of national level legislation, policies, and programs which supports the rights of people with disabilities as outlined in the CRPD.

Key points from the evaluation¹ included those listed below, as well as the challenges in the next section:

Relevance. The evaluation found the ongoing relevance of DRF's objectives to global-level development priorities and to country-level stakeholder needs and priorities. DRF's objectives are especially relevant to the new development framework, emphasizing, "Leave no one behind."

Effectiveness. DRF is on track in achieving the majority of its stated results. Progress has been made in passing national and country-level legislation and policy with grantee participation, in strengthening the DPO movement by increasing the visibility of marginalized groups, and in improving grantee knowledge of the CRPD and capacity to advocate for the rights of PWDs.

Impact. The evaluation did not find evidence of DRF's contribution to its two proxy indicators for impact, i.e., strengthening of national data collection systems on disability and inclusion of PWDs in country development processes. Several reasons were cited for this, including requirements for technical skills to impact data collection, limited access of DPOs to high-level officials, and limited visibility of DPOs in the civil society space.

Sustainability. The evaluation raised some concerns with regard to sustainability in terms of implementation of revised legislation, as well as ability of leading DPOs to mobilize different members of the DPO movement (and other human rights movements) behind priorities requiring collective advocacy.

Efficiency and Economy. DRF's grantmaking and support, including program staff and grantee convenings, are considered by grantees to be accessible and responsive to their needs. From a cost perspective, the ratio between program and administrative costs and staff time allocation was aligned with commonly accepted ratios.

¹ The evaluation followed a framework using OECD / DAC evaluation criteria.

Value for Money². DRF is delivering good value for money with significant progress being made to strengthen the legal framework protecting the rights of PWDs and an inclusive disability rights movement.

5. Challenges remain to realize rights of all persons with disabilities

DRF's support to DPOs has yielded solid wins at the local and national level related to advancement of rights outlined in the CRPD and strengthened disability movements. Yet, seven years since DRF's inception, challenges deeply rooted in discrimination towards PWDs are still to be overcome. It is clear that the realization of rights for all persons with disabilities cannot be accomplished by the limited funding from DRF, even with the dogged determination of the grantees.

The evaluation highlighted challenges the disability movement as a whole, and DRF as a grantmaker supporting the movement, faces in the achievement of goals. Strategic and programmatic discussions post-evaluation will consider the challenges listed below and discuss how to convert them into *opportunities* for DRF.

Overall Challenges

1. **Funding.** Funding for the promotion of rights of PWDs, especially by DPOs, is inadequate among donors and within government budgets. DRF is one of the few donors funding in-country advocacy work (versus service provision) on disability issues.
2. **Few actors promoting disability rights.** DPOs are the only or one of the few actors pushing for the promotion of rights of PWD. There is limited intervention or joint efforts from other human rights movements, NGOs, or other actors.
3. **Negative attitudes and discrimination.** The most challenging and perhaps the most difficult barrier to overcome relates to pervasive negative attitudes and discrimination against PWD. Changing such attitudes and behaviors requires a fundamental paradigm shift among a wide range of actors, including policy makers, funders, and service providers. Discrimination against more marginalized disability groups also needs to be addressed within the disability movement.
4. **Capacity of government and duty-bearers.** Decentralized government authorities often lack the capacity to implement national legislation, policies, and programs. DPOs at sub-national level, with DRF support, play a role in keeping local governments accountable. However, progress is hindered by the lack of adequate regulatory frameworks, budgets,

² According to the evaluation, DRF's Value for Money looks at: 1) **effectiveness** - following processes that foster PWDs' active participation in its work and in society; 2) **equity** - ensuring that the most vulnerable groups benefit from these results; and 3) **sound management practices** - procuring and making best use of quality resources and choosing approaches to yield the most benefits at the lowest costs

and monitoring & enforcement mechanisms, as well as by the limited resources and capacities of duty-bearers.

5. **Implementation of laws.** A major obstacle to the effective enjoyment of rights by PWD remains the actual implementation of the laws, partially because of the newness of the CRPD and lack of good practices.
6. **Organizational and advocacy capacity of DPOs.** DPOs face challenges in organizational capacity, including resource mobilization, as well as in advocacy capacity, since it is a new area of work for DPOs. There is also limited visibility of smaller DPOs, limited support from umbrella DPOs to their chapters, and perceived lack of neutrality of national umbrella DPOs. Sustainability is affected by the absence among grantees of sustainability plans and resource mobilization strategies to follow up on results achieved. There is also limited coordination and partnerships among DPOs, between DPOs and other civil society organizations, and among donors.

DRF's Operational Challenges

7. **Donor engagement.** Donor representatives (including development agency representatives) at the country level are not as engaged in the disability movement and don't have relationships with DRF. The new SDGs coupled with disability frameworks/strategies from bilateral development agencies (such as DFID and DFAT) may create more opportunities for engagement between DRF and development agency representatives on the ground.
8. **Funding for DRF.** Increasing funding is difficult as there is still a lack of money among both private and public sources for international disability rights.
9. **Value for money.** Due to the nature of DRF's activities, it is difficult to estimate "value for money." DFID (and increasingly DFAT and others) requires all their grantees to calculate and maximize the impact of each pound / dollar spent to improve people's lives.
10. **Program support.** The evaluation recommends that DRF: a) enhance the exit strategy to support grantees to develop networks and resource mobilization capacities; b) revise program officer's roles and responsibilities to play a greater role in facilitating strategic partnerships at the country level; c) continue organizing grantee convenings and supporting regular exchanges among grantees and other stakeholders; d) increase language accessibility for grantmaking; and e) increase technical assistance to DPOs.

6. Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The evaluation highlights these specific recommendations:

1. In countries where important progress has been made in harmonizing national and local legislation with the CRPD, DRF grantmaking should continue to support efforts towards the implementation of this legislation.
2. Staff should review DRF's exit strategy with a view to increase the support provided for networking and resource mobilization among grantees.

3. DRF and its donors could look for opportunities to enhance their synergies and working relationships at country level. DRF donors could also explore opportunities and mechanisms to support increased engagement on disability and strengthened coordination.
4. In order to support the strengthening of the disability movement and its inclusiveness, DRF should continue organizing grantee convenings and should support follow-up meetings among grantees.
5. As an organization that puts time and effort into ensuring the inclusiveness of its grantmaking, DRF should consider further increasing the accessibility of its grantmaking in countries, particularly by reducing language barriers and supporting the strengthening of DPO organizational capacities. DRF donors could consider supporting these efforts by making their existing NGO and Civil Society strengthening programs accessible to DPOs.
6. In view of its next strategic plan, DRF's Executive Director, in collaboration with staff and in consultation with donors, should revise DRF's logframe to include the full range of activities conducted (i.e. global advocacy, strategic partnership grants, and Uganda Capacity Fund) in order to speak about DRF's organizational performance in a comprehensive way and better demonstrate contributions to change processes at the global and country levels.

Key lessons learned were:

- Supporting DPOs in advocacy and lobbying activities increases the likelihood that duty-bearers will change their attitudes towards PWDs. Having been given the opportunity to discover PWDs' knowledge and skills around disability-related issues, duty-bearers are more likely to engage with them as partners, advisors, or collaborators.
- Dealing with PWDs as a homogeneous target group is likely to exacerbate the exclusion of some PWDs. Underrepresentation of certain disabilities, language, geographic distance, and limited revenue can become significant barriers to increased inclusiveness in the DPO movement.
- Because of the social, cultural, political, and financial challenges related to disability advocacy around the world, interventions promoting PWDs' rights are likely to require long-term support in order to have the desired impact.
- Because of the volatile economy and unpredictable donor environment, overreliance on donor funding is likely to negatively affect the sustainability of achieved results, if sustainability strategies are not adopted immediately upon entering a country.
- "If you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together." The key to success in promoting the rights of PWDs is having allies from different backgrounds (e.g. other human rights activists, actors in non-disability areas).

7. DRF's Commitment

We are at a pivotal moment in time as we enter into the tenth year since adoption of the CRPD. Prompted largely by the enactment of the CRPD and the advocacy of DPOs, disability is increasingly understood as a human rights issue. In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals referenced disability in numerous goals, including education, growth and employment, inequality, accessibility of human settlements, as well as in data collection and monitoring of the SDGs.

Building on the learnings from the evaluation report, DRF is committed to growing the global impact of the disability rights movement by supporting diverse organizations led by people with disabilities. With discussion of the new strategic plan underway, DRF is articulating its unique strengths in the cross-section of human rights and development. This learning evaluation – which includes feedback from our stakeholders – provides a cornerstone for this process. Strengthening DRF's own capacity and forging new alliances will help to build a greater collective impact on inequality and a larger contribution to achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.