Bridging Solutions in Challenging Times

Disability Rights Fund and Disability Rights Advocacy Fund

2020 ANNUAL REPORT
Dear Friends—

As dire as the situation was, there were openings for advocacy. Grantees worked with governments to secure accessible public health messaging and joined COVID-19 task forces to ensure inclusive response and recovery. New partnerships opened up for women and girls with disabilities to join larger women’s rights efforts, such as Purposeful’s Global Resilience Fund for Girls and Young Women. A growing global understanding of what happens when certain groups are excluded raised the profile of DRF/DRAF’s work—including with donors. We acknowledge, in particular, the Ford Foundation’s generous gift of an additional $3.5 million in general operating funds—an unexpected resource that will strengthen our capacity into the future, and for which we are deeply grateful. We also recognize other new donors from the women’s rights field, who have come on board to fund our work at the intersection of gender and disability.

To take account of this changing context, we have developed and published a Bridge Strategy to guide our work at least through the end of 2021. This Strategy underlines our commitments to learning and evolving and to our participatory approach. As this year advances, we are also working on the next chapter of DRF/DRAF growth. Diana Samarasan, our founding Executive Director, will be leaving the Funds by the end of this year. Over the past 14 years, she has helped change philanthropy through pioneering and advocating for “nothing about us without us” - including people with lived experience of disability in grants decision-making. While her planned exit is deeply felt, we are also excited about the future, and who will lead us into it. The job description for our next Executive Director is posted here.

Your ongoing support and interest in our work and in global disability rights feeds into, as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had envisioned, “bending the arc of the moral universe toward justice.”

With gratitude,

Diana Samarasan, Founding Executive Director
Lorraine Wapling, Board Co-Chair
Andy Ferren, Board Co-Chair

Since 2008, DRF/DRAF have made: $38M+ in grants to 387 organizations of persons with disabilities across 38 countries
**Our Impacts**

- Building Movements
- Driving the Agenda
- Achieving Rights

**We Use 3 Strategies**

- Grantmaking that is flexible and responsive
- Technical Assistance to build back better
- Advocacy to leave no one behind

**Our Lenses**

- **Intersectional**
  We recognize diverse and multiple identities and address human rights at their intersections.

- **Gender Equality**
  We take a gender transformative approach to our work.

- **Participation**
  We center participation by persons with disabilities—“nothing about us without us.”

**Countries With Active Funding**

Bangladesh, Ghana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Malawi, Myanmar, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, and the Pacific Island countries, as well as the United Kingdom and United States (Strategic Partnerships).

**What is creating change?**

Continued advocacy by national level organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) supported by provincial and district / city OPDs.

—Indonesian Grantee

[Our] active involvement in the process. Advocacy and lobbying budgets allocated to facilitate the work.

—Rwandan Grantee

Continuous advocacy, doggedness, and togetherness.

—Nigerian Grantee

Support from development partners like DRF, which enables us to acquire airtime on media, and build our capacity in advocacy work.

—Ugandan Grantee

Inclusion through trainings and awareness campaigns.

—Malawian Grantee
“When the pandemic hit, a lot of organizations were scrambling to figure out what to do. Meanwhile, DRF had already tapped into its network of organizations of persons with disabilities that it had funded for years and pivoted quickly.”

—Ben Wrobel, co-author of Letting Go

Responsive and flexible grantmaking is necessary for organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and persons with disabilities more generally to survive and realign their advocacy work to evolving contexts. This has always been core to our grantmaking approach, and was particularly valuable in 2020. We pivoted more than 80% of active grants to support grantees’ needs and solutions arising from the pandemic. We also revised our grantmaking guidelines for new projects to include a focus on the pandemic and those most marginalized in the disability movement, including women with disabilities.

We expanded use of our WhatsApp and Facebook groups for grantees to increase support and connection, and we also ramped up our advocacy efforts for inclusion of persons with disabilities in pandemic responses from governments and the philanthropic sector. We also provided technical assistance and OPD Strengthening grants as possible as unique needs and opportunities arose for grantees. Unfortunately, the pandemic has had disproportionately negative consequences for persons with disabilities. Communications about safety, access to essential services and supports, and policy changes are not often designed with accessibility in mind; increased time spent at home put women and girls with disabilities at significantly increased risk of sexual and other violence; and children with disabilities were further excluded from accessing education.

As our Board, Grantmaking Committee, and staff shifted to virtual-only operations while juggling new personal contexts, we deepened our culture of care, trust, and diligence. We focused on work and spending that was critical, while creating flexibility where possible. Instead of engaging in a full strategic planning process, we developed a Bridge Strategy that will guide our work through the continued pandemic context. We were fortunate to receive continued support from long-standing funders and also to attract some new funding, enabling us to proceed with critical hires and continue to fully support our grantees.

NOTE: Language is always evolving, and we take our language cues from disability rights activists. We now use organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) instead of disabled persons organizations (DPOs).
Fortunately, our grantees already had credibility and relationships as disability advocates with government through their ongoing advocacy work. They leveraged these networks and their knowledge to advocate for a more inclusive pandemic response. Here are five examples of grantee advocacy efforts:

**The Forgotten People: Indonesians with Psychosocial Disabilities Living in Social Care Institutions amidst the Novel Coronavirus Pandemic**

The Forgotten People — A video campaign created by The Indonesian Mental Health Association (IMHA) to raise awareness of COVID-19 implications for persons with psychosocial disabilities confined to institutions.

**Inclusion of People with Disabilities in COVID-19 interventions** — From Good Morning Uganda segment, featuring the National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda (NUDIPU).

**“While COVID-19 has presented enormous challenges so far, it has also built solidarity and increased the effectiveness of partnerships that HWDI and others have been building.” —Maulani A. Rostinsulu, Chairperson of Himpunan Wanitas Disabilitas Indonesia, the national umbrella organization of women with disabilities**

**Announcement on Enhanced COVID-19 Prevention Measures** — One of many sign language videos released by the Rwanda National Union of the Deaf (RNUD) in partnership with local authorities.

**The “Angajman Kwape Kowona” Challenge** — A music video supported by the Bureau of the Secretary of State for Youth, Haiti Efficace, and CADHai in efforts to encourage disability-inclusive preventative sanitary efforts to diminish the spread of the pandemic.

**COVID-19 Containment Measures Not Inclusive** — An article from the African Federation of the DeafBlind (AFDB) of Malawi expressing concern over lack of guidance and support for persons with disabilities during COVID-19.
Within days of the pandemic’s onset, OPDs began advocating for inclusive responses. We wanted to amplify their work by capturing these advocacy stories in real time. Jody Santos, an international documentary filmmaker who has dedicated her career to the rights of persons with disabilities, developed this and other stories through interviews with our grantees. In 2021, we’ll be jointly piloting the Disability Justice Project, a participatory storytelling initiative to challenge cultural narratives about disability and to amplify the voices of OPDs in the Global South.

**COVID-19 Stories: Nuanua O Le Alofa (NOLA)**
by Jody Santos, May 2020

When Samoan Prime Minister Tuilaepa Sailele Malielegaoi declared a national state of emergency last month due to COVID-19, Nuanua O Le Alofa (NOLA)—the national advocacy organization for persons with disabilities in Samoa—sprung into action to make sure his daily briefings about the coronavirus were accessible to everyone. Thanks to their lobbying efforts, the Prime Minister was accompanied for the first time by a Sign Language Interpreter—a woman named Noue Mavaega, NOLA’s policy and research coordinator—on March 23. The Prime Minister was so pleased with Mavaega’s work that his government now includes her in most of its press conferences and she has gained notoriety through the country as “Samoa’s silent communicator.”

“I can gladly say that we are leading the way in terms of inclusive coverage of the coronavirus to our members and to those who need our services,” says Mata’a’afa Fa’atino Utumapu, NOLA’s general manager and president of the Samoa Blind Persons Association, a sub-group of NOLA and 2019 DRF grantee.

“I can understand what is happening in the world with coronavirus from all the press releases that the Prime Minister releases on TV provided that there are interpreters,” adds Maselina Iuta, vice president of the Deaf Association of Samoa, another sub-group of NOLA and 2019 DRF grantee.

NOLA has used Mavega’s appearances with the Prime Minister to educate the public about the critical role interpreters play in conveying information to those who are deaf and hard of hearing. When some people began ridiculing Mavaega online last month, Utumapu used the opportunity to remind people of the importance of inclusion. “Without sign language, those who have impaired hearing or [are deaf] will continue to be put down and the minority in societies,” she told the Samoa Observer.

After their success with the Prime Minister, NOLA began advocating for sign language interpretation at other events and, as a result, experienced an increase in requests from entities like the Ministry of Health and TV stations. Now NOLA is pushing on another front—working to ensure that Ministries send their information materials to Samoa Blind Persons Association’s Braille Translation Unit. “We played a critical part in reminding our government partners of the significance of making sure that their preparedness services need to be inclusive of persons with disabilities,” says Utumapu. “At the moment, we have a COVID-19 response plan, which we distributed to our donor partners for supports.”

NOLA also has a spot on a regional Pacific World Health Organization (WHO) COVID-19 sub-working group on risk communication, which has allowed them to advocate for and support an inclusive response to the virus on a regional level as well. Despite these recent victories, NOLA’s General Manager says her organization won’t be letting up anytime soon: “The work is still moving, and as they say, the show must go on in terms of whatever we’re doing at the moment is not going to stop because of the many things we have done. Even though we represent two percent of our population, it doesn’t mean that this population can be ignored.”

Read more stories in this series >>
Gender and disability intersect and produce specific experiences of discrimination for women with disabilities. These experiences inform the advocacy of women with disabilities and foster their organizing. “We want women with disabilities to carry their own voices. [...] That’s why women with disabilities have to be at the center of the cause, as stakeholders and spokespersons for their demands” — Soinette Désir, Union des femmes à mobilité réduite d’Haïti – UFMORH, 2019

Translated and shared by Dominique Masson, Stephen Baranyi, and Ilionor Louis from their forthcoming article, Entre le mouvement des femmes et le mouvement des personnes handicapées: Mobilisations intersectionnelles des femmes handicapées en Haïti.

**Women with disabilities are essential leaders in the disability rights movement and intersectional movements.** During the pandemic, organizations of women with disabilities led advocacy efforts to promote inclusion, safety, access to justice, and bridge-building with other movements. To showcase their leadership and solutions, we hosted an event at the 13th Conference of State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in partnership with The Global Resilience Fund for Girls and Young Women at Purposeful, Women Enabled International, and the HI-Making It Work Gender and Disability Project. Speakers shared how women and girls with disabilities are dealing with two pandemics—COVID-19 and gender-based violence—and the ways in which they are fighting both.

**Watch the event recording>>**

**Our Gender Guidelines**

Our Gender Guidelines build on our work to lift up marginalized voices in the disability community and to address the intersections of rights. The guidelines are an expression of our commitment to apply a gender transformative lens to our work, as well as to learn more about the issues facing women and girls with disabilities from more marginalized communities and those with non-majority identities and sexualities (such as racial and ethnic minorities, refugees, or LGBTQI persons), so that we can best support all persons with disabilities.

**Read our gender guidelines>>**

**Staff Spotlight**

The NGO Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) named Dwi Ariyani, DRF/DRAF’s Program Officer for Indonesia, as the NGO CSW64 Woman of Distinction for Asia! Dwi became the first woman with a disability to receive this honor. All the awardees spoke during the NGO CSW/NY September meeting. In her remarks, Dwi called upon UN Women to ensure greater inclusion of women with disabilities in their work. NGO CSW has since announced that they will make sure that the CSW65 Virtual Forum is “as global, inclusive, and accessible as possible.” We are proud to have Dwi on our team!
GRANTEES

Disability Rights Fund

Africa

Ghana

Global Disability Summit 2018
Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations
Lakeside Disability Rights Advocacy Initiative
Voice of People with Disability Ghana

Malawi

Small Grants

Community Support for Persons with Albinism
Human Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities in Malawi
Rumphi Self Help Initiative of the Visually Impaired
The Registered Trustees of Disabled Women in Development
The Registered Trustees of the Association of the Physically Disabled of Malawi
The Registered Trustees of the Disabilities HIV AIDS Trust
The Registered Trustees of the Forum for the Development of Youth with Disabilities
The Registered Trustees of the Mental Health Users and Carers Association
The Registered Trustees of the Visual Hearing Impairment Membership Association
The Registered Trustees of Vipya Disability Association

Mid-Level Coalition

The Registered Trustees of Disabled Women in Africa

Special Opportunity
The Registered Trustees of the Visual Hearing Impairment Membership Association

Nigeria

Small Grants

Association of Lawyers with Disabilities in Nigeria
Centre for Citizens with Disabilities
Deaf Women Aloud Initiative
Lionheart Ability Leaders International Foundation
Nigeria Association of the Blind - FCT Abuja Chapter
TheseAbilities Women and Youth Empowerment Multi-Purpose Co-Operative Society, Ltd.
Voice of Disability Initiative

Mid-Level Coalition
The IREDE Foundation

National Coalition
Disability Rights Advocacy Center

Technical Assistance
Disability Rights Advocacy Center

Rwanda

Small Grants

Collectif TUBAKUNDE

First People with Disability Organization
Initiative for Social Development Organization
National Organisation of Users and Survivors of Psychiatry in Rwanda
Organisation d'Intégration et de Promotion des Personnes Affichant des Atteintes d'Albinisme
Rwanda National Association of Deaf Women
Rwanda National Union of the Deaf
Rwanda Union of Little People
Rwanda Union of the Blind

Mid-Level Coalition

Umbrella des Organisations des Personnes en Situation de Handicap Luttant Contre le VIH et le SIDA et pour la Promotion de la Santé
Umuryango Nyarwanda w’Abagore Bafite Ubumuga

Special Opportunity
African Initiative for Mankind Progress Organization

Technical Assistance
National Union of Disabilities Organizations of Rwanda

Uganda

Small Grants

Buliisa District Union of Persons with Disabilities
Bundibugyo District Association of the Deaf
Epilepsy Support Association
Gulu Women with Disabilities Union
Luwero District Disabled Women Association
Out & Proud Minority Disability Support Association
Show Abilities Uganda Ltd.
Source of the Nile Union of Persons with Albinism
Uganda National Association of Cerebral Palsy
Uganda National Association of the Blind
Youth with Physical Disability Development Forum

Mid-Level Coalition

Hoima District Union of Persons with Disabilities

National Coalition
Disability Rights Advocacy Center

Technical Assistance
Disability Rights Advocacy Center

Asia

Bangladesh

Global Disability Summit 2018
Access Bangladesh Foundation
Women with Disabilities Development Foundation

Indonesia

Small Grants

Children and Youth Disabilities for Change
Perkumpulan Penyandang Disabilitas Indonesia
Gerakan Untuk Kesejahteraan Tunanetra Indonesia
Himpunan Wanti Penyandang Cacat Indonesia Sulawesi Selatan
Ikatan Disabilitas Purworejo
Perhimpunan Jiwa Sehat
Perkumpulan Difabel Sehati Sukoharjo
Perkumpulan Tuli Buta Indonesia
Yayasan CIQAL
Yayasan Peduli SINDROMA Down Indonesia

Mid-Level Coalition

Perkumpulan Sasana Inklusi Dan Gerakan Advokasi Difabel
Yayasan Sentra Advokasi Perempuan Difabel Dan Anak

National Coalition
Perhimpunan Organisasi Harapan Nusantara

Special Opportunity
Himpunan Wanti Disabilitas Indonesia
Perhimpunan Jiwa Sehat

Myanmar

Small Grants

Hmawbi Disabled People Organization
Karen State Association of Persons with Disability
Myanmar Association of Persons Affected by Leprosy
Myanmar Deaf Community Development Association

Caribbean

Haiti

Small Grants

Association des Femmes Handicapées du Sud
Association des Handicapées du Nord-Est
Association des Parents des Personnes Handicapées du Sud
Association des Personnes Handicapées d’Anse d’Hainault
Association des Sourdes de Lévêque en Haiti

Association Haïtienne de Football Amputé
Association pour la Promotion du Droit et l’Intégration des personnes Handicapées du Sud
Organisation des Enfants Démunis et Handicapés d’Haiti
Organisation des Handicapés en Action pour le Progrès

Reseau Association National pour l’Intégration des Personnes Handicapées

* = This organization also received an OPD Strengthening grant, which is made to pooled fund grantees to support capacity development.
Disability Right Advocacy Fund

Africa
Malawi
Small Grants
* Fambauone Youth Organisation
  National Coalition
* Malawi Union of the Blind

Nigeria
Small Grants
Nigerian Association of the Blind
She Writes Women Mental Health Initiative
The Albino Foundation

Rwanda
Small Grants
* Rwanda Organisation of Persons with Deafblindness
  National Coalition
* National Union of Disabilities Organizations of Rwanda

Uganda
Small Grants
* Masaka Association of Persons with Disabilities Living with HIV & AIDS

Asia
Indonesia
Small Grants
* Dewan Pengurus Daerah Perkumpulan Penyandang Disabilitas Indonesia Provinsi Kalimantan Tengah
  Perkumpulan Penyandang Disabilitas Klaten
  Yayasan Muara Hati
  Yayasan Pelopor Peduli Disabilitas Situbondo
  Yayasan Pusat Pemberdayaan Penyandang Disabilitas Indonesia Bali
  Mid-Level Coalition
  Himpunan Wanita Disabilitas Indonesia
  National Coalition
* Pusat Pemilihan Umum Akses Disabilitas
  Technical Assistance
  Persatuan Tunanetra Indonesia

Myanmar
National Coalition
Disabled People’s Development Organization

Caribbean
Haiti
Mid-Level Coalition
* Reseau Association National pour l’Integration des Personnes Handicapes
  National Coalition
* Coalition Nationale des Associations des Personnes Handicapées
  Federation Haitienne des Associations et Institutions des Personnes Handicapes d’Haiti
  Société Haitienne d’Aide aux Aveugles

Pacific Island Countries
Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea
Small Grants
* Bougainville Disabled Persons Organization

Fiji
National Coalition
* Fiji Disabled Peoples Federation

Republic of the Marshall Islands
Small Grants
* DeafFLOURISH, Inc.

Papua New Guinea
Small Grants
* Papua New Guinea Youths with Disabilities

Samoa
Small Grants
* Deaf Association of Samoa, Inc.
* Persons with Physical Disabilities Association Samoa
* Samoa Blind Persons Association

Solomon Islands
Small Grants
* Disabled Peoples’ Association of Solomon Islands

Boards

Charlie Clements
Andy Ferren (Co-Chair)
Mariel Gonzales (Treasurer)
Aditi Juneja
Setareki S. Macanawai
Alex Msitshana
Beth MacNairn
Maria Ni Fhlatharta
Michael Njenga
Kristen Pratt
Diana Samarasas (Ex-Officio)
Alberto Vásquez
Lorraine Wapling (Co-Chair)

We would also like to acknowledge with deep gratitude the contributions of former Board members Ola Abu Al Ghaib, Kai Dickerson, and William Rowland (and his support person Jeanette McKenna). They helped DRF/DRAF achieve the scale and impact that we’re proud to build on.

Management Team

Diana Samarasas, Founding Executive Director
Roger Falco, Deputy Director
Alice Phinizy, Finance Director
Jen Bokoff, Director of Development
Faith Lemon, Program Director
Arlene Wilson-Grant, Director of Grants Management
Christina Parasyn, Technical Assistance Director

And of course, none of this is possible without our entire staff. Read about our full team>>
**Grantmaking Committees**

Our Grantmaking Committee makes all pooled fund grantmaking decisions, and critically informs our grantmaking priorities. Committee members are a mix of disability rights activists and donor representatives—and in some cases, both! The members are:

- Jenipher Akinyi
- Nikki Brown-Booker
- Rebecca Cokley
- Nandini Ghosh
- Harriet Knowles
- Robyne Leven
- Kimberly O’Haver (non-voting)
- Waqar Puri
- Sanja Tarczay
- Myroslava Tataryn
- Ishumael Zhou

**Board observers (non-voting):**

- Aditi Juneja
- Maria Ní Fhlatharta
- Setareki Macanawai

We would also like to extend a special thank you to outgoing committee members, Alberto Vásquez and Pratima Gurung.

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**PARTICIPATORY GRANTMAKING**

**“Nothing about us without us”**

“Nothing about us without us” is essential to structuring disability rights work. Participation is embedded in everything that we do. Persons with disabilities are part of our governance, staffing, and—importantly—grant decision-making. DRF/DRAF are participatory grantmakers, with an active Grantmaking Committee composed of donor representatives and global leaders with disabilities, which—through a consensus process—reviews and monitors country strategies and makes final grant decisions. Our participatory grantmaking model has been widely recognized through numerous articles in publications like Alliance Magazine, Nonprofit Quarterly, and Candid, webinars with partners like the Salzburg Global Seminar and Human Rights Funders Network, and the book *Letting Go: How Philanthropists and Impact Investors Can Do More Good by Giving Up Control.*

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**Supporting Progress on the SDGs**

The top five Sustainable Development Goals supported through our grantmaking and advocacy are:

- **Good Health and Well-being**
- **Quality Education**
- **Gender Equality**
- **Reduced Inequalities**
- **Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**

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**Supporting Progress on the SDGs**

The top five Sustainable Development Goals supported through our grantmaking and advocacy are:

- **3 Good Health and Well-being**
- **4 Quality Education**
- **5 Gender Equality**
- **10 Reduced Inequalities**
- **16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions**
DRAF’s timely, flexible, and multi-dimensional advocacy support helps give voice to people with disabilities amidst the global pandemic. This advocacy is making a lasting difference in disability-inclusive response and recovery efforts. Australia is a long-term supporter of DRAF because its grantmaking extends the reach of our development assistance, including to new and emerging disabled people’s organizations. —DFAT

Since its inception, the Disability Rights Fund has embodied the “nothing about us without us” principle in its grantmaking practices and how it engages with communities around the world. It has shown us the transformational impact when people with disabilities are included in all levels of decision-making and empowered to take action. The Ford Foundation is proud to support DRF’s mission to ensure that people with disabilities participate fully in society and enjoy equal rights and opportunities. —Ford Foundation

Donors

Funding for DRF in 2020 was provided by an anonymous foundation; The Ansara Family Fund at the Boston Foundation; The Estelle Friedman Gervis Family Foundation; the Ford Foundation; the Foundation for a Just Society; the Foundation to Promote Open Society, part of the Open Society Foundations; the Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation; U.K. aid from the U.K. government; WE Trust; and individual and corporate donors.

DRAF is supported by Australian Aid.

We are grateful for the support of all of our donors.

The views expressed in this communication do not necessarily reflect the official policies of any of our donors, or the governments they represent.

See current donor list >>
The Disability Rights Fund is a 501c3 organization, EIN 27-5026293.
The Disability Rights Advocacy Fund is a 501c4 organization, EIN 27-5026463.

**PHOTO**: Staff dinner in Rwanda, February 2020.

**FRONT COVER PHOTOS** (left to right):
Opening of the Women’s Forum for Women who are Blind and Visually Impaired in Samoa.
A focus group in Indonesia led by Puspadibali about drafting legal regulatory frameworks (PERDA).
Strategic advocacy training participants from Disability Rights Advocacy Centre in Nigeria.
Meeting of First Peoples Disability Organization in Rwanda and their fiscal sponsor for training Batwa parents of children with disabilities in education rights.

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