



**DISABILITY
RIGHTS
FUND**

**DISABILITY
RIGHTS
ADVOCACY
FUND**

BRIDGE STRATEGIC PLAN

(Amended and Extended through 2022)

Introduction

The Bridge Strategic Plan, originally developed to guide the Disability Rights Fund and Disability Rights Advocacy Fund (DRF/DRAF) through the pandemic period from July 2020 through December 2021, is now being amended and extended through 2022 in recognition of ongoing complications from COVID-19 and the current organizational executive leadership transition. Amendments to the Plan are based on an assessment process led by the organizations' Evaluation & Learning Manager.¹ Extension will give a new executive director time to coordinate development of the next multi-year Strategic Plan.

Since March 2020, the pandemic has presented significant challenges for everyone. This is particularly true of persons with disabilities, as further outlined in the multi-stakeholder [COVID-19 Disability Rights Monitor report](#), in which DRF played a part. Too often, governments and broader society have neglected to include persons with disabilities in response and recovery planning, and this means that OPDs are “trying to mitigate the consequences of policy decisions that ha[ve] not adequately considered people with disabilities.”² During COVID-19, DRF/DRAF grantees have been at the forefront of these efforts in the countries where we provide grants. From ensuring sign language interpretation during official broadcasts, to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the distribution of essential supplies, to advocacy for access of persons with disabilities to vaccines, and more, our grantees have been hard at work to

ensure persons with disabilities are part of efforts to respond to the pandemic.. At the same time, they have been confronting the impact of COVID-19 in their own lives and on their own organizations. This has included deaths of key leaders, and immense personal and organizational challenges during lockdowns and restrictions, especially in contexts where internet access is limited, and/or where governments have used the pandemic to limit civic space.

The pandemic has also stretched DRF/DRAF organizationally and each staff (and Board and Grantmaking Committee) member individually. All are dealing with changed work and family contexts, and regular organizational activities – such as meetings and travel for oversight or advocacy – have been moved virtually or are in flux. At the same time, new opportunities have arisen as the urgency of ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities has come into particularly sharp focus. We have pivoted and changed grantmaking significantly and rapidly in light of COVID-19. Early on, the Program Team reached out to and worked closely with grantees to adjust nearly all grants due to the changed nature of activities mandated by limitations on in-person activities, heightened health and economic risks, and new opportunities for advocacy. These adaptations to better serve the community's needs have since been integrated into revised grantmaking priorities and into new funding streams, including support for organizational and movement resilience. Operating during COVID-19 has also led to increased Strategic Partnerships addressing intersectionality, which is in line with our Gender Guidelines and our focus on especially marginalized groups. We have also taken up new joint work with others—such as the COVID-19 Disability Rights Monitor, the Global Coalition on Deinstitutionalization, and Purposeful's Global Resilience Fund—to address critical needs and new opportunities.

¹ From April to September 2021, staff, Board (via the Program Strategy Task Force), and Grantmaking Committee members provided input about successes and challenges of the 2020-2021 Bridge Strategic Plan and what to focus on in a revised 2022 Bridge Strategic Plan. The three data collection tools included: 1) a three-question survey (respondents provided input via an online survey or email); 2) August 2021 Program Officer Learning Journals and September 2021 Reflection Discussions; and 3) two sense-making discussions conducted at the September 2021 Asia/Pacific and Africa/Caribbean/US Staff Meetings in September.

² Quoted from a recent Inclusive Futures report available at <https://www.sddirect.org.uk/media/2268/english-situation-report-opds-covid-19-report-final.pdf>

This extended and amended Bridge Strategic Plan 2022 provides a road map during a critical and unpredictable period. It is a living document that has and will incorporate change as needed to enable DRF/DRAF to be responsive and nimble in complex times and as the organizations undergo their first executive leadership transition. We will use it as a guide to help us prioritize, adapt, and learn, rather than as a rigid strategy that ties our hands in the face of internal and external shifts.

We use 3 strategies to advance disability-inclusive development and rights.

During the pandemic, we're deepening and strengthening work in these strategy areas.



Grantmaking

that is flexible and responsive

- Amend active grants to accommodate shifts in needs as well as new opportunities
- Increase time and ways for organizations to apply for and use funding
- Add pandemic-specific advocacy into grantmaking guidelines



Technical Assistance

to build back better

- Implement a new funding stream to strengthen OPDs, so they are ready to build back better
- Increase use of social media and online tools among grantees for connection and advocacy



Advocacy

to leave no one behind

- Support disability-inclusive responses by global actors
- Expand partnerships to increase resources for the disability movement



**More than
80% of grants
pivoted**

**2020
examples...**



**Activated Facebook
& WhatsApp groups
for each region's
grantees**



**Partnered on
Disability Rights
Monitor survey
and report**

Glossary

AWID - Association for Women's Rights in Development

CREA - A feminist human rights organization based in New Delhi, India

CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DEI - Diversity, equity, and inclusion

DRF/DRAF - Disability Rights Fund/Disability Rights Advocacy Fund

GLAD - Global Action on Disability, a network of donors and civil society committed to disability-inclusive development

GMC - DRF/DRAF's Grantmaking Committee, which is a committee of the Boards

IDA - International Disability Alliance

IDDC - the International Disability and Development Consortium

Intersectional - The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups

Logframe - Logical Framework, a key piece of DRF/DRAF's monitoring and evaluation.

OMT - Organizational Mapping Tool, a process undertaken as part of the Ford Foundation's BUILD grant received by DRF/DRAF

OPD - Organization of Persons with Disabilities

PSEAH - Preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

SOGIESC - Sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics

TA - Technical assistance

Washington Group Short Set - A set of questions designed to identify (in a census or survey format) persons with disabilities

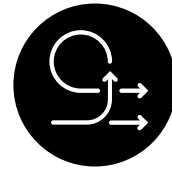
Overarching Commitments

As we continue to implement the three strategies outlined in the [Strategic Plan 2017-2020](#) - grantmaking, advocacy, and technical assistance (TA) -, we remain committed to promoting participation, intersectional human rights, and a gender transformative approach throughout our structure and our work.

Building on our historical and ongoing intersectional work, and on lessons learned during COVID-19 and from #BlackLivesMatter protests across the world, we will continue to identify and resource OPDs working at the intersections of rights. From ongoing and new donors, we have specific funding focused on intersectional work (gender and disability, Indigenous Peoples and disability). We are applying this approach in all countries and regions - ensuring that OPDs representing diverse ethnic, racial, Indigenous, gender and SOGIESC identities are increasingly included in our grantee cohorts - to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within and beyond the disability movement. We are also looking to continue diversifying our own structures at governance, management, and staffing levels - see Organizational Development section below.

In line with our Gender Guidelines, we are increasingly applying a gender transformative lens to our grantmaking, technical assistance, and advocacy work. During the next year, this will include: 1) publicizing and disseminating the Gender Guidelines Implementation Plan; 2) expanding training opportunities for the Program Team and other staff on disability, gender, and SOGIESC intersectionality; 3) increasing our funding to organizations of women with disabilities and organizations led by women with disabilities, OPDs of persons with disabilities of diverse SOGIESC, and OPDs mainstreaming a gender lens; 4) providing other support - through Strategic Partnerships and technical

assistance - to strengthen the capacities of grantees promoting gender-diverse participation and leadership; and 5) pursuing advocacy opportunities to build a more inclusive movement for gender equality in partnership with other funders, networks, and organizations.



Grantmaking *that is flexible and responsive*

Given the specific needs of persons with disabilities as they have responded to and worked to survive the pandemic, our grantmaking during this period has reflected greater flexibility. We have enabled our grantees to use DRF/DRAF funding for a combination of rights advocacy, operating expenses, institutional capacity-building, and movement sustainability. We have developed new funding streams, such as Core Support, acknowledging the need for greater organizational and activist support at this tumultuous time and pivoting monies not used for travel and in-person meetings. As part of COVID-19 project changes for grantees, unspent funds have been repurposed for important expenses such as access to internet and online tools and other communication technology to facilitate continuation of work amidst restrictions on in-person activities. Funds have also paid for expenses to ensure offices and staff are not lost and to support the disability community to tackle acute issues, such as lack of food; personal protective equipment (PPE); water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) needs; and more. We have done this, recognizing that we are often the only donors to very grassroots or marginalized groups who have no other support.

To further address grantee wellbeing, over the next year, DRF/DRAF will explore providing ongoing additional funding to our grantees to encourage staff wellbeing initiatives. We will also look into providing automatic no-cost extensions and/or several months of additional

funding to grantees who have lost staff to help find, train, and retain new project staff. Members of the GMC and Management Team will be encouraged to reach out to grantees who lose members of their senior leadership as well as to recognize the work of grantees with specific acknowledgement of their efforts and to reiterate the importance of prioritizing wellbeing.

Cognizant that neither we nor our grantees are humanitarian actors, we have and are also participating in key advocacy activities to government and humanitarian actors, such as the COVID-19 Disability Rights Monitor and GLAD, and have supported grantees to join COVID-19 task forces and seize other opportunities for on-the-ground advocacy for a more inclusive response.

Using lessons learned during COVID-19, recommendations from our [independent evaluations](#) and a 2019 grantmaking overhaul assessment, we are overhauling our grantmaking system toward improving accessibility, increasing simplicity, and enhancing workflows including grantee oversight. While keeping in mind the challenges presented by COVID-19, we continue to enhance support for grantees in high risk areas such as financial management and safeguarding, through the OPD Strengthening funding stream as well as assessments and audits. OPD Strengthening funds are available either in conjunction with Pooled Fund grants or as standalone grants, and are based on capacity-building gaps identified in risk assessments that are part of our pre-award due diligence process for each applicant. We are also continuing to improve the financial due diligence within our grantmaking and will be investing additional resources in training the program team on financial oversight and other key functions. This is especially important as COVID-19 has created new challenges for OPDs, and will promote the sustainability of grantee organizations as well as their rights advocacy efforts.



Technical Assistance *to build back better*

With the hire of a Technical Assistance (TA) Director at end 2020, DRF/DRAF has started to increase capacity to provide grantees with more frequent, relevant TA opportunities. In 2021, in response to grantee feedback in Annual Grantee Surveys and independent evaluations, a new format of TA - learning exchanges - was introduced to resource timely opportunities for grantees within and across DRF/DRAF's target countries to come together virtually. This format centers the movement as the experts and TA providers on rights advocacy. It has created spaces for grantees to share experiences, strategize together, and learn from one another on their identified priorities such as the intersection of gender, disability, and sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, preventing gender-based violence, and wellness for activists.

We are adapting our Technical Assistance Strategy to reflect the hybridization of support outlined above. Initial analysis and consultations on the strategy refresh are directing us to explore how TA can increase support so more marginalized persons are active in movements and their voices are heard at all levels, more marginalized groups are represented and active in human rights and development processes, and a growing pool of TA expertise is available and sourced from within the disability movement. The new strategy will also respond to the addition of Core Support and OPD Strengthening funds and explore strategic ways to enhance institutional capacities (such as financial management, administrative capacity building, PSEAH policy development or trainings, and resource mobilization) so that organizations emerge from this crisis as more sustainable, effective organizations.

With a new grants management system underway, it will be possible over the next year to better link our grantee risk assessments to TA and other supports to track improvements over time. This will expand upon current TA efforts aimed at supporting OPDs to build technical skills to advocate for the achievement of rights and inclusive development, and will be useful in assessing overall grantee health.

To achieve more in this time period, we will continue to grow partnerships that include TA such as with the [Disability Justice Project](#) and [Women Enabled International](#), and with other donors and partners towards strengthened grantee capacity and access to key venues.



Advocacy to leave no one behind

Advocacy for disability inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in decision-making is key to rights advancement as well as to the survival of OPDs and persons with disabilities more broadly, especially at this time. The impact of inequality has been underlined by COVID-19, the global #BlackLivesMatter movement, #MeToo and more. Field-building or advocacy among donors, rights, development, and humanitarian actors in disability rights and participatory approaches are necessary strategy to achieving human rights and Agenda 2030. Now is the time to leverage attention to these issues to challenge philanthropy, human rights, development, humanitarian, and climate change actors and agendas to shift towards rights-based and disability-inclusive approaches that center marginalized people in all aspects of their work and operations, including via participatory grantmaking. OPDs need increased funding so they are able to meet the urgent need for disability inclusion in pandemic response and recovery, to build resilient and sustainable organizations, and refocus on long-

term advocacy promoting duty-bearer accountability in addressing systemic discrimination and rights violations.

Over 2021, DRF/DRAF developed an advocacy strategy concept note as a first step to developing an Advocacy Strategy that will articulate our unique position and our approaches to dynamically drive change at regional and global levels, together with the movement. The concept note will be used as a basis to focus consultations internally and among our key stakeholders around our past and future advocacy efforts. Grantees will be central to this process. In 2022, DRF/DRAF will hire a Senior Program Officer for Strategic Partnerships and Advocacy to drive the strategy development process.

Strengthening DRF/DRAF advocacy capacity, including via partnerships with entities that can enhance grantee storytelling, such as the Disability Justice Project, and support cross movement building, such as Women Enabled International, We Are Purposeful and the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) will further empower persons with disabilities to participate fully and effectively in society on an equal basis with others.



Evaluation and Learning

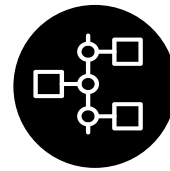
At the start of the pandemic, DRF/DRAF incorporated some modest annual milestones and targets in recognition that advocacy achievements, particularly around legislation, policy, and alternative reports. Instead, DRF/DRAF grantmaking and TA as well as grantees working to advance the CRPD in their countries have exceeded expectations. Eighteen months into the 2020-2024 logframe, DRF/DRAF has met or exceeded nearly two-thirds of the annual milestones for its output indicators.

As the COVID-19 global pandemic and political instability continue to impact OPDs in target countries, we are closely monitoring how our grantees are promoting a more inclusive pandemic response and recovery and gathering lessons learned in how grantees operate in increasingly constrained contexts. Entering the third year of the 2020-2024 logframe, we will track progress towards our outputs with a COVID-19 lens, as follows:

- **Output 1:** Legislation, policy, and government programs (including those addressing national and global crisis responses, such as COVID-19) undergoing harmonization with the CRPD in target countries through the participation of representative organizations of persons with disabilities (DRF/DRAF grantees)
- **Output 2:** Representative OPDs (DRF/DRAF grantees) from target countries participating in international and national human rights and SDG monitoring processes (including disability rights monitoring during national and global crisis responses, such as COVID-19)
- **Output 3:** Disability movement in target countries is inclusive, reflecting the diverse voices of persons with disabilities
- **Output 4:** OPDs(DRF/DRAF grantees) equipped to advocate on the rights of persons with disabilities (including during national and global crises, such as COVID-19)

To continue to triangulate data with direct grantee input, in 2021 the Annual Grantee Survey also moved under the Evaluation & Learning department. An external consulting team is being hired to lead the survey implementation, data analysis, and report development. Long-term patterns in the work of DRF/DRAF will be

partially captured in an anticipated joint independent evaluation with FCDO DCBP partners in 2023. The evaluation process may begin in late 2022.



Organizational Development

Along with significant and welcome growth in organizational activities, made possible by increased fundraising success, the level of activity has expanded significantly. From a previous average of 100-125 grants, the organizations are now giving close to a combined 300 grants annually. There has also been expansion to a new country and additional strategic partnerships. Levels of risk in several target countries have increased sharply and addressing that has been a challenge. All of this has led to continued stretching of internal capacity, exacerbated by donor uncertainty that has, fortunately, started to clear but that caused a significant delay in the pace of anticipated hiring.

In addition to increased support to grantees, DRF/DRAF have focused on internal streamlining and strengthening. A Grantmaking Overhaul (GM OH) was launched at the beginning of 2021 and picked up pace over the summer. An ongoing migration from one grants management system to another is part of an effort to democratize our data and streamline our grantmaking and grants management processes. While this major initiative, undertaken at the same time as an upgrade to the Salesforce donor management system and an email migration, is meant to simplify processes and reduce redundancy, it has taxed the staff involved. All of the growth and change has taken place in a context of prolonged homeschooling, seemingly endless Zoom meetings, and direct and indirect experiences of loss.

Internally, team wellbeing is a critical consideration. The Deputy Director role was added a few years ago to focus on reducing and better distribution of heavy workloads and managing processes of organizational growth. The entire Management Team, as supervisors and leaders, are tasked with working toward an improved organizational culture. It will take continued intentional and concerted effort to mainstream wellness as well as a further shift in organizational culture and the normal activist's tendency to do ever more now for the cause. Noting heavy workloads, stress caused by the pandemic, and uncertainty during a time of executive transition, team members have been encouraged to take time off when needed. We piloted additional paid leave and are considering it again. We are in the process of hiring a Talent and Culture Manager who will build out staff wellbeing initiatives, as well as professional development opportunities, DEI efforts, and more.

We are in a period of organizational growth. With teams such as finance and programs expanding with the addition of coordinators and Regional Heads of Programs (RHOPs), there are more people to do the ever-growing amount of work. RHOPs for Africa and Asia are starting a decentralization of the work so that, as much as possible, it takes place closer to grantees and by staff who have a better understanding of local contexts and realities. To that end, we plan to hire regional finance and safeguarding officers, as well as eventually additional regional staff. We are also planning to train and empower Program Officers to play a more active role in stewarding applicants. This will include expanding outreach efforts, offering programmatic guidance, and increasingly performing due diligence historically handled by headquarters in order to ask relevant questions earlier in the process (e.g., flagging issues for follow up when reviewing an audit report or registration documents). In this way, the process can be more participatory; our capacity to reach and resource more grantees will be

expanded; and the increasing number of grants should become more manageable for the program and headquarters staff alike.

Meeting these goals requires substantial financial resources. After successful fundraising in 2020 and 2021, DRF/DRAF are well positioned to handle increased expenditures in 2022 and beyond. We will end 2021 with approximately \$5m available for 2022. Income for 2022, budgeted at \$8.5m adds to the \$5m already available for 2022 expenditures. Expenditures for 2022 are budgeted at just over \$11m. While we will need to rely on our prior income to cover the anticipated loss in 2022, we are confident in the fundraising plan for the years to come. We have started building our operating reserve, and at the end of 2021 will have approximately 1.5 months of funds to cover operating expenses available in our reserve (note that these funds are excluded from the \$5m in available funds at the end of 2021). We will continue to build the reserve in 2022 and beyond with a goal of 6 months of operating funds set aside.

With the additional growth outlined above, we are currently estimating the following breakdown of expenditures:

Program Expenditures: 77%

Regranting: 57%

Other Program Expenses: 20%

Administrative Expenditures: 16%

Fundraising Expenditures: 7%

A key priority in this bridging period, noted during the 2020 OMT process that was conducted as part of our Ford BUILD grant continues to be increasing our development capacities and the diversification of our funding. DRF/DRAF are together the largest international funder solely focused on disability rights advocacy. With [only 2% of human rights funding going to disability rights](#) (and only 1% of women's rights funding going to women with disabilities), there is a significant need to increase the number of donors funding advocacy led by or inclusive of persons with disabilities. In addition, the pandemic has underlined the need for additional funding³ to ensure movement and organizational sustainability, and the opportunity to increase the visibility of our critical work. Our Director of Development and new Associate Director of Bilateral Relations will partner with the new Executive Director in mapping the way forward.

Our safeguarding efforts have expanded significantly and need to grow further. We have rolled out requirements around preventing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment to all current grantees. As the COVID-19 situation begins to improve, grantee training around PSEAH and financial management will supplement the newly developed policies of many of our grantees. At present, we are working with outside consultants to assess financial management training and/or mentoring that can occur virtually for our grantees. Internally, the Deputy Director co-leads the Safeguarding Team with the Finance Director, guided by the Safeguarding Protocols. DRF/DRAF led a multi-agency investigation and have contracted a grantee assessment as well as financial audits. The Risk Management Team regularly reviews allegations

³ For your data point, <https://humanrightsfunding.org/populations/disabilities/>: if you divide up the 4% of OCED HR funding going to persons with disabilities - and then take 18% of that dollar amount of that (which is listed in the foundation funding by intersection populations in the right column of the page) - you'd get .72%% (i.e. less than 1%) of OCED HR funding going to women and girls with disabilities.

and situations that arise. DRF/DRAF have been an active member of the Funder Safeguarding Collaborative since its launch.

Moreover, we plan to expand our work in the vital area of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), work that is to be led by the new Talent and Culture Manager. We have worked to do this at Board level as we have replaced Board members whose terms have come to an end in order to meet our bylaws requirement of 50% persons with disabilities as well as people from the Global South. We expanded the number of activists with disabilities on the Grantmaking Committee (GMC) from 4 to 6, as outlined in our governance restructuring document. As we expand our team, we will continue to strategize how to diversify, in particular at the senior management level. One way forward may be to work with a DEI consultant on how to build from our 2020 organizational statement, "[Justice Demands We Live a Different Set of Values](#)". The Talent and Culture Manager will develop a formal DEI policy and action items including ongoing staff training. Our goal is to continue to ensure we have a diverse organization at all levels, with the broadest range of diversity possible.

Looking to the future

The amended and extended Bridge Strategic Plan will guide DRF/DRAF through 2022. This plan presents a road map for our efforts to address the numerous challenges presented by the pandemic, particularly for persons with disabilities, but really for all of us. Because it is based on lessons learned during the pandemic as well as our proven pathway to change, it will continue to support organizational success during an executive leadership transition. In 2022, the new Executive Director, Boards, and personnel of DRF/DRAF will work toward the next multi-year strategic plan to take us further into the future.

PATHWAY TO CHANGE



Committed to promoting intersectional human rights and gender equality throughout our structure and our work.



SUPPORT TO OPDs

To advance human rights and disability-inclusive development



Grantmaking



Technical Assistance



Advocacy

BUILDING MOVEMENTS

Disability movement strengthened and part of broader human rights movement

- Persons with disabilities equipped with human rights skills and knowledge
- Disability movement broad and diverse
- Persons with disabilities engaged in other human rights movements

DRIVING THE AGENDA

Persons with disabilities at decision-making tables

Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) participating in human rights and development processes at local, national, regional, and global levels

ACHIEVING RIGHTS

Rights of persons with disabilities achieved through systems change

Legislation, policy, government and development programs, and budgets are in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and leave no one behind

Persons with disabilities participate fully in society and enjoy equal rights and opportunities

Participation of persons with disabilities is essential in everything that we do.