



What Works to Further the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:
 Lessons Learned from Disability Rights Fund/Disability Rights Advocacy Fund
 2017-2019 Global Independent Evaluation and Internal Monitoring
 2017-2020

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In 2019 the Disability Rights Fund/Disability Rights Advocacy Fund (DRF/DRAF) commissioned BLE Solutions to conduct an independent evaluation of its global partnership with DPOs between 2017 and 2019 to advocate for the fulfillment of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). This document is specifically for DPOs and presents lessons learned from the DRF/DRAF global evaluation. DRF/DRAF’s aims to further the learning exchange among DRF/DRAF and DPOs, without whom the advancement of disability rights would not be possible. DPOs and national government partners may find this information useful in continuing to further the rights of persons with disabilities. Each of the four lessons below has some background on how DRF/DRAF engages in that area of its work and a short statement on how DPOs might be able to apply that lesson to their own advocacy or organizational development.

The full evaluation report, the Executive Summary, and the DRF/DRAF Management Response is available on [the DRF evaluation webpage](#). The DRF/DRAF staff and Board are fully committed

to our mission, our partners, and the mutual learning that is critical to further and sustain the rights of persons with disabilities.

Evaluation Background Information

The purpose of this evaluation was to help DRF/DRAF and its key stakeholders learn from the Funds' work, to inform any needed course correction, and to more broadly share achievements and lessons learned. The evaluation focused on five sample countries: Bangladesh, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Uganda. The evaluation team included national evaluators in each of the five sample countries. The team gathered information using document and data review, individual and group interviews. There were 85 interviewees, including DRF/DRAF staff, board members, donors, and partners at global and country levels, and grantees. In Indonesia and Uganda, the evaluators used contribution analysis to assess DRF/DRAF's contribution to two advocacy achievements.

Lesson 1: Success in Disability Rights Advocacy Has Many Factors

Background: DRF/DRAF's model is based on advocacy by persons with disabilities to be active participants in decision-making in society and with government. DRF/DRAF partners with DPOs to work as an amplifier of DPO voices at the global level and a convener that helps to broaden and strengthen disability movements at the national level. This section provides insights into effective disability rights advocacy by persons with disabilities.

1: DPOs use a variety of advocacy tactics to influence change

DPOs in various countries and political contexts use similar tactics to influence policy, legislation and government programs. This includes holding consultations with targeted disability groups; educating the general public and key policymakers about the human rights of persons with disabilities; building the capacity of other DPOs and persons with disabilities to advocate for their rights; gathering information via research, consultations, and observation; holding media campaigns and events to gain support for their influence strategies; and meeting and sharing information with elected, appointed, and career government officials, non-governmental organizations, or other civil society organizations.

DPO Application: DPOs may find this information helpful in designing their own advocacy activities or strategies.

2: Linkages with government offices can be augmented by development partners

When partnerships with national government offices are possible and constructive, support from development partners can help DPOs build constructive relationships with those they seek to influence. For example, development partners that can provide introductions to bi-lateral national offices and national government offices for specific advocacy activities and to help bi-lateral national offices and national government offices further the understanding that DPOs are disability rights experts and partners. As a result of this increased access, DPOs have increased credibility and opened doors for DPOs to conduct additional advocacy

activities, such as consultations on inclusive government programs or situation analyses of access to education for children with disabilities.

DPO Application: DPOs may find this useful in strategizing how to develop allies and partnerships with advocacy targets, such as national government officials and staff.

3: Intentional and strategic partnerships amplify the voices of DPOs

Substantive partnerships between DPOs and development partners with global and regional networks facilitate the unique insights of grassroots and national DPOs into global conversations. Development partners can facilitate and fund DPO presentations of monitoring reports and participation in regional and global conferences and meetings. Development partners can also do the work of accompanying DPOs in global processes, such as navigating the United Nations system, so that DPOs advocate and speak for themselves within complex international structures that may not be fully accessible.

At the national level, development partners can be particularly effective as a convener of various DPOs; a partner in strengthening DPO organizational capacities; a connector between DPOs and government officials or other donors; and a supporter of cross-movement collaboration or more diverse members among national umbrella DPOs. In addition, development partners may open doors for DPOs to new donors. DPOs value how DRF/DRAF has facilitated donor and development partner contacts, who are seeking to implement their disability-focused investments.

DPO Application: DPOs may find these tactics useful when seeking to further partnerships with other civil society organizations and development partners at the national level. At the international level, DPOs may find this information helpful in considering how to best engage with international disability and development mechanisms.

Lesson 2: Diverse Movements Contribute to Advocacy Achievements

Background: To foster diversity within national disability movements, DRF/DRAF partners intentionally with newly formed, or emergent, DPOs and DPOs representing marginalized groups, such as women with disabilities, persons with albinism, indigenous persons with disabilities, persons with intellectual disabilities, persons with psychosocial disabilities.

4: Increased diversity requires intentional investments of time and resources

DRF/DRAF sets goals annually to partner with newly formed, or emergent, DPOs and DPOs. This requires DRF/DRAF Program Officers to spend time each year reaching out to emergent DPOs or self-help groups as it takes intentional investment in small or nascent DPOs, who often represent the most marginalized groups of persons with disabilities and may have no other donors. Individual DPOs benefit from development partners that are willing to take the strategic risk of funding small or nascent DPOs to help them get established. Intentional partnership with DPOs should include dedicated time and resources for technical support in developing proposals, even those going to other development partners or funders. One

Uganda government official noted the impact of investments in small or new DPOs , “There has been development. I am seeing so many associations, like little persons, people with albinism, people with cerebral palsy. The persons with disabilities are more enlightened about their rights. They demand services now. As they demand participation in development, others are saying that they should have more representation in Parliament. This is triggered by the DPOs themselves.” This investment of time and resources has been shown to increase diversity of the movements and coalitions, which in turn contributes to success in advocacy.

DPO Application: Small or nascent DPOs may want to share this information to potential and existing partners when discussing the benefits of intentional investments into the small or nascent DPOs.

5: Greater diversity builds political strength

A key strategy DRF/DRAF applies as a funder is bringing various DPOs together, especially DPOs who represent marginalized groups, to emphasize the importance and impact of a diverse and unified national movement. A more diverse and representative disability movement allows government partners to see the breadth and scope of the rights persons with disabilities. In countries where strategic investments have been made, DPOs representing more marginalized groups of persons with disabilities are now DRF/DRAF grantees, representatives and members in umbrella groups, advocates to government or human rights monitoring bodies, or even leaders within disability movements. This has led to greater inclusion of persons with disabilities in political processes and great political influence by persons with disabilities.

For instance, larger and more diverse delegations seem to have a great impact on the review committees as more inclusive and diverse representation in international platforms are thought in this area to specifically bring in voices and ideas from marginalized groups within the disability movement. It was noted by a person familiar with the CRPD Committee and CRPD Review Process, “In countries where DRF/DRAF are present, the DPOs will have a larger delegation and a larger impact on those CRPD review committees.”

DPO Application: DPOs may find this information helpful when seeking to build or strengthen more effective advocacy coalitions or partnerships that could help advance human rights and disability rights advocacy agendas. DPOs may also apply this information when seeking to highlight the value and effective contributions of DPOs representing more marginalized persons with disabilities.

Lesson 3: Targeted Technical Support Contributes to Achieving Advocacy Successes

Background: DRF/DRAF makes strategic investments to enable grantees to undertake advocacy activities by prioritizing this area of work for its Program Officers and by including technical assistance training from other subject matter experts within project budgets. Technical

assistance ranges from sharing information to grantees, facilitating a deeper understanding of an advocacy issue, suggesting language and advocacy approaches when seeking to influence key community and policy maker, to fostering cross-movement partnerships at the national, regional, and global levels.

6: Investments in DPO capacity leads to increased confidence in skills, knowledge, and success

As mentioned above, accompaniment from development partners can facilitate DPO access to policymakers and continue to gain confidence in their advocacy skills and rights knowledge. In addition, DPOs have noted their increased capacities to advocate for themselves after technical assistance on specific focus areas, such as detailed CRPD knowledge, how to monitor the rights of persons with disabilities, and what needs to be included in national policies and legislation for them to be CRPD-compliant. They had gained skills and confidence in strategizing their advocacy approach, writing alternative reports and presenting their recommendations in international settings, as well as in providing input to or actually drafting legislation and policies and working with other civil society organizations and government officials to promote their adoption. Because of their greater capacity for advocacy, DPOs noted that they have greater access to government decision-makers, are better equipped, have more empowered staff, and have been able to mobilize greater numbers of constituents. Smaller DPOs noted that after DRF/DRAF invested into their advocacy capacity, they had more and stronger partnerships with other DPOs and cross-movement collaboration to advance the rights of persons with disabilities.

DPO Application: DPOs may seek to ensure technical assistance for advocacy is included in their advocacy project activities.

Lesson 4: Positive Unintended Consequences to Advocacy Successes

Background: With a strategy designed by persons with disabilities, DRF/DRAF partners with DPOs to advance legal frameworks that support the human rights of persons with disabilities. Over the years, in multiple countries a pattern of positive unintended consequences is emerging as well.

DPO Application for all sub-lessons: DPOs may be encouraged by the positive additional results of investment in the development of alternative reports, which can take two to four years to develop, or national disability legislation, which may take a decade to get passed. The visibility at the global level that the submission and presentation of alternative reports contributes to change at local level and national levels. Additionally, passage of national legislation often comes with an increased level of public awareness, political will, and validity among other human rights movements.

7: Sustainability begins with changes in policy and within disability movements

After years of sustained funding, DPOs may note that they now have a broader network for engagement, with expanding membership. This provides more visibility for their activities, which in turn, attracts new constituents. The increased visibility may even result in funding interest from other donors and more requests for partnership activities, and in some cases, institutional growth. These changes can in turn make it easier for DPOs to engage with government counterparts. They have access to government institutions and have built new working relationships with them. As a result, DPOs have noted that, in terms of sustainability, there are now advocates, whether at Parliament or in Ministries who champion disability issues. This also facilitates local level change to further sustain national level changes.

8: Heightened Visibility and Collective Power of DPOs

As the rights of persons with disabilities have been furthered through the advocacy success of DPOs, partners from other social movements and government officials report the disability movement is more visible and considered an important partner on issues related to the human rights of persons with disabilities. According to one DPO, *“DPOs have become valuable resources to government officials, who seek their advice and inputs when they are developing new regulations to ensure that they are inclusive.”* Some DPOs note that now, because of their experience working with government to help bring about changes in policies and legislation, national disability movements and individual DPOs are now better equipped to work with government to ensure their rights are respected. In these contexts, DPOs increasingly realize their collective power as disability advocates.

9: Visibility at the global level offers DPOs greater legitimacy

One of the main areas DRF/DRF partners with DPOs is in international human rights and development monitoring and reporting. There are multiple benefits to long-term funding to DPOs for the preparation of monitoring reports, the presentation of said reports through DPO-led delegations, and follow-up with their governments. DPOs and individual delegates that participate in these processes often have transformative experiences. Delegates often leave their country and present in global venues for the first time and return home with a deeper understanding of international advocacy and gain more confidence in their advocacy skills. In addition to internal, individual changes, DPOs and delegates are seen as having more legitimacy and influence by their peers and government institutions. These changes, along with sustained funding from development partners, allow DPO to continue to engage with their governments to further their rights and full participation in society.