

DRF/DRAF Global Evaluation – 2017-2019

Report

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Submitted by:

Carlisle Levine, BLE Solutions, United States

Toyin Akpan, Nigeria

Doris Bartel, United States

Yulianto Dewata, Indonesia

Phoebe Katende, Uganda

Hippolyt Pul, Ghana

Sukharanjan Suter, Bangladesh

# Executive Summary

## Evaluation Overview and Methodology

The purpose of this evaluation was to help DRF/DRAF and its key stakeholders, including its donors, learn from the Funds’ work over the past three years (2017-2019) to inform any needed course correction and to more broadly share achievements and lessons learned.

To assess DRF/DRAF’s work, the evaluation focused on five sample countries: Bangladesh, Ghana, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Uganda. They represent DRF/DRAF’s work in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, as well as countries at different moments in DRF/DRAF’s engagement: recently entered, mid-investment, and exiting.

The evaluation team, led by BLE Solutions,[[1]](#footnote-2) included national evaluators in each of the five sample countries, as well as expertise in evaluating advocacy, and particularly disability rights advocacy, at local, sub-national, national, and global levels. The team gathered information using document and data review, individual and group interviews. The 85 interviewees included DRF/DRAF staff, board members, donors, and partners at global and country levels, and grantees. To analyze the information gathered, the evaluation team used qualitative and quantitative analysis. In Indonesia and Uganda, the team used contribution analysis to assess DRF/DRAF’s contribution to two selected outcomes. Across all the countries, the evaluation team assessed DRF/DRAF’s value for money.

## Findings

### DRF/DRAF are relevant and aligned.

DRF/DRAF’s logframe outcome and outputs are largely relevant to and aligned with the priorities of donors, persons with disabilities, and DRF/DRAF’s grantees. All of these stakeholders, including DRF/DRAF, seek to protect and promote human rights, including of persons with disabilities, as well as disability-inclusive development. DRF/DRAF’s goals and logframe are most influenced by the CRPD, since DRF/DRAF were conceptualized as a response to the CRPD. A wide stakeholder group, including donors, partners and grantees, provided input into DRF/DRAF’s goals and monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) framework - and that has added to its relevance to other actors.

### DRF/DRAF’s expansive role is relevant.

When articulating DRF/DRAF’s relevance within the global movement for the human rights of persons with disabilities, staff, board members, donors, and partners felt that DRF/DRAF are more than simply a funder. They described DRF/DRAF as a risk taker, a thought leader with deep expertise in promoting the human rights of persons with disabilities at global and grassroots levels, a connector, an amplifier of DPO voices, and a convener that brings DPOs together and helps to broaden and strengthen movements.

DRF/DRAF are seen as a risk taker. They were the first foundation to have a unique focus on the CRPD and to support DPOs in their desire to work on the rights outlined in the CRPD. They are also one of the only donors to work with small and nascent DPOs, often representing the most marginalized groups of persons with disabilities, and, in many cases as their first funders, paving the way for these DPOs to receive future funding from others.

DRF/DRAF are seen as a thought leader with deep expertise in promoting the human rights of persons with disabilities at both global and grassroots levels. DRF/DRAF bring grassroots and national knowledge into global conversations through their and their grantees’ participation in key events, as well as through the documents and reports that they produce and share. Donors particularly value the country assessments that DRF/DRAF develop and share, often noting that they have no other source for this information.

DRF/DRAF are seen as a connector, educating DPOs and national movements about global processes and helping to connect DPOs with other global stakeholders involved in promoting the human rights of persons with disabilities, including donors.

DRF/DRAF are seen as an amplifier of DPO voices, and a convener that brings DPOs together and helps to broaden and strengthen movements. One of the ways in which DRF/DRAF broaden movements is by bringing grantees together during regular grantee convenings to hear from each other and jointly build an advocacy strategy. In these convenings, DRF/DRAF purposefully bring together grantees that are national and grassroots, more established and less established, and representing more and less marginalized groups. The convenings offer DPOs an opportunity to strengthen their capacities, build ties among themselves, and make connections with government officials, other civil society actors, and other donors.

To further increase DRF/DRAF’s capacity to effectively fulfill these roles as a risk taker, a thought leader, a connector, an amplifier of DPO voices, and a convener and to strengthen DRF/DRAF’s image as constructive partners, national government representatives interviewed for this evaluation asked that DRF/DRAF communicate more directly with them about their vision and plans.

### DRF/DRAF’s strategy is effective.

DPOs appreciated receiving DRF/DRAF’s financial and technical assistance, as well as assistance with networking. They felt DRF/DRAF offered them the resources they needed to strengthen their capacities and influence local and national-level change.

With support from DRF/DRAF, DPOs have influenced a large number of changes in national and local-level legislation, policy, and government programs since 2017, as validated by this evaluation, as well as before, as validated by earlier independent evaluations. In addition, DRF/DRAF support has helped DPOs to participate in international and national human rights and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) monitoring processes.

DRF/DRAF-supported DPOs are recognized for their effectiveness in these monitoring processes, according to DRF/DRAF staff and board members. A staff member stated, “*We often hear that the [DRF/DRAF-supported] DPOs are the best prepared [among those who present to the CRPD Committee]*.” According to a partner very familiar with the CRPD review processes, “*In countries where DRF/DRAF are present, the DPOs will have a larger delegation and a larger impact on those CRPD review committees*.”

At national levels in all five countries, grantees reported influencing legislation and also guidelines and regulations aimed at implementing that legislation between 2017 and 2019. Because DPOs’ advocacy for and technical contributions to these changes were seen as critical to their passage or adoption, and because many of these DPOs are solely funded by DRF/DRAF, these DPOs believe that DRF/DRAF’s financial support for their efforts was essential to achieving the timely passage or adoption of these changes.

Working to advance these changes strengthened DPOs and national disability movements and helped build new and lasting cross-movement relationships. This has led to meetings and discussions that have promoted confidence and further networking of persons with disabilities with government and the broader disability movement. As a result, staff, DPOs, partners, and government officials reported that DPOs’ and the movements’ work raised DPOs’ and the movements’ profiles at local and national levels.

### DRF/DRAF contribute to diverse movements dedicated to the human rights of persons with disabilities.

DRF/DRAF staff and board provided a number of examples of how DRF/DRAF’s support has helped disability movements become more inclusive of all persons with disabilities. Evidence cited showed how, thanks at least in part to DRF/DRAF’s support, people representing more marginalized disability groups are now included as DRF/DRAF grantees, representatives and members of umbrella DPOs, representatives speaking to government or at various events, or even as leaders of movements. There were various marginalized groups cited as now being better included, including little people, people with albinism, women with disabilities, and people with psychosocial disabilities.

*“In countries where DRF/DRAF are not present, the movement is not as inclusive.” – DRF/DRAF Partner*

Grantees and government officials report that the expansion of the national disability movements primarily resulted from DRF/DRAF’s funding and technical assistance, which has helped build the organizational capacity of newer DPOs and helped them get registered. According to one grantee, “DRF/DRAF challenge us, [asking] ‘How inclusive is your organization?’ They have also made us aware of the marginalized categories and their potentialities and that they are part of the disability movement.”

Most donors and partners interviewed can cite examples of how DRF/DRAF are influencing disability movements to become more inclusive. In fact, one observed that “in countries where DRF/DRAF are not present, the movement is not as inclusive.”

### DRF/DRAF contribute to DPO capacity.

DPOs’ increased capacities to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities, as a result of the support they receive from DRF/DRAF, was evident to most interviewees. Grantees were largely satisfied with the technical assistance DRF/DRAF provided, although some indicated room for improvement.

All DRF/DRAF staff and board members, most grantees, and half of the interviewed donors and partners, as well as government officials, remarked on DPOs’ increased capacities to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities, as a result of the support they receive from DRF/DRAF. Grantees were reported to better understand the CRPD and U.N. processes, as well as what needs to be included in national policies and legislation for them to be CRPD-compliant.

Grantees had more and stronger partnerships with other DPOs and with organizations in other movements who could help them advance their issues. They had gained skills and confidence. 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. Association with DRF/DRAF increased the visibility of the DPOs in the public sphere, magnifying and strengthening their voices.

Most described DRF/DRAF’s technical assistance as “very relevant, timely, and accessible” or “relevant, timely, and accessible.” Most described the time and effort it took them to access DRF/DRAF’s technical assistance as “just right.”

This also related to support grantees received to participate in national and global advocacy efforts, saying the time and effort DRF/DRAF provided for DPO participation was “just right.”

### DRF/DRAF is known and appreciated for its participatory grantmaking approach.

DRF/DRAF are participatory grantmakers, meaning that persons with disabilities are involved in decision making about DRF/DRAF’s funding, including strategic decisions about that funding, at all levels, from board and Grantmaking Committee[[2]](#footnote-3) to staffing.

Among DRF/DRAF staff, board members, donors, and partners, some felt DRF/DRAF were exemplary among participatory grantmakers. A similar number appreciated DRF/DRAF’s participatory grantmaking practice and also identified some opportunities for DRF/DRAF to become even more participatory in their approach. Finally, a similar number felt DRF/DRAF have even more room to strengthen their participatory grantmaking approach, by for example, making Grantmaking Committee materials more accessible and easier to digest.

*“[The cost of using a participatory grantmaking approach is] the cost of doing business to get the most effective outcomes.” – DRF/DRAF donor or partner*

According to DRF/DRAF staff, board members, donors, and partners, DRF/DRAF’s participatory grantmaking approach is worth its expense. According to one donor or partner, “It’s the cost of doing business to get the most effective outcomes.”

### Grantees largely appreciate DRF/DRAF’s grantmaking support.

The majority of DRF/DRAF grantees described DRF/DRAF’s grantmaking and support as efficient and effective; some staff members identified room for improvement. In terms of grantmaking, most grantees described DRF/DRAF’s grantmaking support as “high quality,” while some described the support as “adequate.” In response to an open-ended question, grantees in Uganda stated they appreciated that DRF/DRAF let grantees decide how they wanted to use the funds they received. If the evaluation team had asked other grantees about this specifically, more might have provided a similar response.

Almost all grantees described the time and effort they put into submitting grant applications to DRF/DRAF as “just right.” They described the process as “simple and easy to understand.” They appreciated the template and guiding questions provided, as well as the technical assistance DRF/DRAF offer to help them develop their proposals, which one grantee described as uncommon to receive from donors. All grantees reported receiving their grant funds from DRF/DRAF in a very timely manner.

In contrast, half of DRF/DRAF staff and board members interviewed felt DRF/DRAF needed better grantmaking processes. At least one reported hearing similar feedback on this from grantees, contrary to what grantees reported to the evaluation team.[[3]](#footnote-4) The staff and board members recognized that the processes demand a lot of time and effort from potential grantees and program officers within a relatively short timeframe. Yet,in spite of the concerns they raised about DRF/DRAF’s grantmaking process, interviewed DRF/DRAF staff, donors, and grantees agreed that DRF/DRAF are more efficient than other donors in their grant delivery.

### DRF/DRAF exhibits good value for money.

DRF/DRAF have demonstrated careful attention to balancing the four value for money Es: economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity, in their grantmaking and institutional systems. Some modifications would make this even stronger.

As described above, DRF/DRAF and their grantees have been very effective at achieving their intended results, and DRF/DRAF have been efficient in their delivery of grant funds, technical assistance, and support for persons with disabilities to participate in national and global advocacy.

In addition to findings described above, according to a few staff, board members, and donors, DRF/DRAF have made good progress in developing templates that program officers and other staff can use to collect information from DPOs, provide technical assistance, assess risk, review grant applications, and make decisions.

Some staff noted that other processes still need to be systematized in this way, for example, protocols and templates for monitoring progress after funds are granted, and checklists and guidance for greater clarity of budget allocations for technical assistance.

## Conclusion and Recommendations

As evidenced in this evaluation, DRF/DRAF’s goals and objectives are relevant to DPOs, governments, other donors, and partners similarly seeking to protect and promote human rights, including of persons with disabilities, as well as disability-inclusive development. All of these stakeholders value DRF/DRAF’s leadership in the global movement to promote the human rights of persons with disabilities and appreciate opportunities to learn from DRF/DRAF’s experience. DRF/DRAF have made great progress in supporting DPOs to influence changes in policies, legislation, and programs, as well as to participate in national and international advocacy. DRF/DRAF have helped national disability movements gain strength and diversify their membership. DRF/DRAF have also helped DPOs strengthen their advocacy capacity.

All DPOs interviewed pointed to examples of changes in policy, legislation, and programs that are now sustainable, as long as countries do not experience significant changes in priorities of political leadership or emergency situations that affect them. They noted that ongoing advocacy and funding are required to ensure their implementation. Equally importantly, individual DPOs and national disability movements have gained new skills and confidence and have built new or stronger relationships with government officials – all resources that will help them continue to advocate for the human rights of persons with disabilities.

DRF/DRAF have contributed to these changes while operating efficiently in its grantmaking, technical assistance provision, and support for grantees who are participating in national and international advocacy, as assessed by this evaluation. As part of their embrace of equity and to maximize the effectiveness of their grants, DRF/DRAF use a participatory grantmaking approach that is appreciated by stakeholders. These elements contribute to DRF/DRAF’s value for money: DRF/DRAF are effective and efficient in achieving their goals and objectives, and do so in an equitable way.

Building on DRF/DRAF’s accomplishments to date and grounded in the findings presented in this evaluation, stakeholders identified a number of modifications DRF/DRAF may want to consider to further strengthen their work going forward. These recommendations were identified prior to the start of the current COVID-19 pandemic. While some of these may be possible to act on during the pandemic, others may need to wait until after the pandemic is over, and still others may need to wait until some degree of economic recovery has taken place.

1. ***Further increase staff numbers and modify DRF/DRAF’s organizational structure and fundraising to support them***. That DRF/DRAF doubled their staff between the end of 2018 and mid-2019 is a step in the right direction. This was possibly the maximum increase that DRF/DRAF could have sustained over the course of a year. However, in the coming years, further staff growth could give DRF/DRAF much needed additional capacities, as described in this report.

To ensure DRF/DRAF’s continued efficiency and equity in its practices, the model, as DRF/DRAF grow, needs to be more decentralized than the current one, with even greater delegation of decision making to teams within DRF/DRAF. It will also require, as DRF/DRAF have already acknowledged through their 2019 hiring and development of an initial development strategy, expanding fundraising beyond private foundations and bilateral donors to access more diversified funding. Some suggested that a focused strategy on external communications could contribute to a broader donor outreach strategy. A few board members, donors, and partners already see DRF/DRAF taking these kinds of steps.

1. ***Further strengthen DRAF/DRAF’s role within the global disability movement: develop a global influencing strategy.*** DRF/DRAF have been leaders in the promotion of the human rights of persons with disabilities globally. How are DRF/DRAF acting as a thought leader and sharing their learning? How are DRF/DRAF using their position and power to advance the human rights of persons with disabilities at a global level? What is their role within the larger movement, and how does that role complement the roles of others? DRF/DRAF may want to consider developing a global influencing strategy, which defines and targets different audiences. This may mean increasing staffing to include a communications team.

Many donors, partners, and board members suggested that DRF/DRAF more systematically share lessons learned from their disability-inclusive, participatory grantmaking processes. More than one interviewee suggested that DRF/DRAF could share portions of country assessments that are safe to make more widely public.

DRF/DRAF are valued for their capacity to amplify DPO voices and bring DPO perspectives into global conversations. There may be ways to do this more systematically by setting up more channels and processes for sharing DPO experiences more broadly, for example, by producing and sharing more guides and videos describing successful models or by creating even more opportunities for DPOs to share their experiences nationally, regionally, and globally.

At a national level, national governments and national-level partners, such as international NGO representatives and donor country offices, are eager to work more directly with DRF/DRAF. More direct relationships could allow for stronger partnerships, as long as they are designed to protect the rights of persons with disabilities.

1. ***Further increase the efficiency and effectiveness of DRF/DRAF’s activities, by revisiting systems and processes***. As DRF/DRAF grow in size and complexity, DRF/DRAF need to continue revisiting their systems and processes to ensure their efficiency and effectiveness.
2. ***Further strengthen DRF/DRAF’s movement building approaches***. DRF/DRAF are recognized for their work helping national disability movements grow stronger and more diverse. Long country engagements are required to help these movements become sustainable. During country engagements, DRF/DRAF should continue to help movements gain greater cohesion, integrate more marginalized groups as core members, develop their leadership pipelines, and seek out strategic allies and cross-movement partnerships. Through the accompaniment that the program officers provide, program officers could focus more deeply on helping movement members build trust with each other and come to understand and appreciate different perspectives.
3. ***Further strengthen DRF/DRAF’s approaches to helping DPOs strengthen their capacity***. DPOs are grateful for the support they receive from DRF/DRAF to strengthen their advocacy capacity. Government officials, other donors, and partners recognize the difference this support makes. As more stakeholders become interested in the human rights of persons with disabilities, and as they increasingly see DPOs as good partners, more will be asked of them. With this in mind, DRF/DRAF may want to reflect on the capacity building support they offer. To meet more DPO capacity building needs, such as those related to organizational development, program officers may want to partner more intentionally with national-level organizations that offer those services.

DRF/DRAF may want to invest even more time and effort in equipping DPOs representing marginalized disability groups, since in many contexts, their representation is still perceived as token and their participation is not at decision-making levels.

DRF/DRAF should continue to help the DPOs they support mobilize other DPOs at a community level, where very few persons with disabilities are aware of their rights as outlined in the CRPD.

In contexts where change is happening slowly, it would be helpful to clarify the focus of grantee technical assistance. For example, in those settings, DRF/DRAF may want to focus on awareness raising to help address stigma.

To further promote DPO learning, DRF/DRAF may want to expand the learning opportunities they support, including by setting up and participating in more national, regional, and global WhatsApp groups and by providing grantees with access to more technical assistance providers with a range of technical expertise. DRF/DRAF’s quarterly e-newsletter is valued and should continue.

1. ***Seek out more ways to mainstream marginalized DPOs***. DRF/DRAF are recognized for their intentionality around reaching and including more marginalized DPOs in national disability movements. DRF/DRAF may want to continue to work closely with national disability movements to help them not only include representatives of marginalized groups, but also mainstream them in their governance and promote their acceptance within the movements. In addition, DRF/DRAF may want to document, monitor, and share inclusion practices among grantees, especially with and among umbrella groups. Finally, DRF/DRAF could focus more resources on reaching remote areas. DRF/DRAF could do this directly, or they could provide even more support to larger DPOs’ efforts to reach smaller DPOs in these areas.
2. ***Further articulate DRF/DRAF’s programmatic sequencing and exit strategy***. DRF/DRAF currently commit to at least six years in each target country and work in two-year cycles to develop, assess and revise country strategies. DRF/DRAF may want to articulate the logic of this timeframe and sequencing, so that it is clear how their strategy addresses the current context, and when, why, and how DRF/DRAF will exit a country. DRF/DRAF may want to rethink how they remain engaged with national movements and DPOs with which they have built relationships even after they are no longer present in country, as a part of the strategy for sustainable social change. This could be via continued participation in WhatsApp groups and periodic sharing of e-newsletters, or other methods.

# DRAF/DRF Management Response

**Introduction**

This independent evaluation of the global Disability Rights Fund/Disability Rights Advocacy Fund (DRF/DRAF) work provides valuable strategic information that will help the organizations’ staff and Boards continue to improve upon more than a decade of participatory grantmaking towards advancing the rights of persons with disabilities. The findings of the global evaluation offer evidence of how persons with disabilities can effectively and efficiently advocate for their rights and provide new perspectives about our practices and intended results. Interestingly, the evaluation has confirmed many ongoing internal discussions about how to continue to strengthen our processes with the aim of easing administrative burdens for DPOs, increasing shared learning practices externally, and increasing staff capacity to engage more with disability movements in our target countries and at the global level.

We wish to acknowledge and appreciate the time and input of the DPOs that contributed to this evaluation with their insights and whose achievements are reflected in the evaluation’s findings. We would also like to thank the BLE Solutions evaluation team for the generous time, expertise and guidance they dedicated to this evaluation. We also wish to thank our Evaluation Advisory Board, a temporary representative body of evaluation experts, DPO staff, grantees, and donors, for the strategic advice they provided from the evaluation design to the report finalization process. The Evaluation Advisory Board included Ola Abu Al Ghaib, Director, United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; Mika Kontiainen, Director of Disability Section, Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT); Zsuzsanna Luppai, Associate Director for Program Development, Human Rights Program, Open Society Foundations; Setareki S. Macanawai, Chief Executive Officer, Pacific Disability Forum; Myroslava Tataryn, Disability Rights Program Officer, Wellspring Philanthropic Fund; and previously Cynthia Lokanata, Disability Section, DFAT and Daryl Lloyd, Statistics & Results Adviser, Disability Inclusion Team, United Kingdom Department for International Development.

We also acknowledge that this Management Response was written during the height of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The pandemic has already had a serious impact on activities of the Disability Rights Fund and the Disability Rights Advocacy Fund and on those of our grantees, and this is only likely to increase. Many global, regional, and national meetings have been cancelled or delayed until at least late 2020 or 2021. Our offices and those of our grantees have been closed. While everyone is doing their best to work remotely, this is more difficult for DRF/DRAF grantees, many of whom have no internet connection or computer at home. DRF/DRAF Program Officers maintain regular communication with grantees primarily over smart phone and social media.

As a follow-up on our commitment to transparency and to ensure advancement of a broad understanding of disability rights advocacy, we are publishing the full report on our website and providing a document on lessons learned specifically for grantees to utilize in their advocacy and organizational development. In addition, the evaluation executive summary and the summary for grantees will be translated into Easy to Read, Bahasa Indonesia, Burmese, and French.

**Management’s Views on Recommendations**

Management concurs with the overall evaluation findings and recommendations and will undertake actions to address issues raised as appropriate and as organizational capacity allows. Specific responses to recommendations are given below and were written in Spring 2020 within the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic.

**Recommendation 1:** **Further increase staff numbers and modify DRF/DRAF’s organizational structure and fundraising to support them**

*Agree*

Prior to the COVID-19 global pandemic, DRF/DRAF envisioned and began to implement plans toward an expanded team to diversify funding sources and further develop efficiencies within the staffing structure. This expansion included the formation of a Development Team in 2018 and the increase of administrative and program staff from 2018 to 2020 with the hiring of a Deputy Director, 8 new Program Team members including a Regional Head of Programs for Africa position, and 2 critical administrative team members. The result has been a 100% increase in the team that has resulted in a corresponding increase in DRF/DRAF’s presence on the ground in target countries, a decentralization of supervision, and a more equally distributed workload among the staff. In addition, DRAF/DRF developed a Delegation Schedule in 2019, which speaks to delegation of decision-making and is now being integrated into new Finance and Administration Manuals, and an updated DRAF/DRF procurement policy.

In the future, DRF/DRAF plans to hire for a number of open and aspirational positions, particularly in regard to increased commmunications capacity to better share knowledge and best practices and complement fundraising efforts, when it is prudent and will not negatively bear upon funds available for grantmaking. Growth and expanded engagement with DPOs are integral to the trajectory that the DRF/DRAF Board and Management have set for the organization, and the organization recognizes the value of a clear communications strategy for our internal staff and key partners. Internally we have seen that when vision is clearly outlined in a guidance document, such as the [Pathway to Change](https://disabilityrightsfund.org/wp-content/uploads/Screen-Shot-2019-11-25-at-2.42.11-PM.png), [DRAF/DRF Gender Guidelines](https://disabilityrightsfund.org/about/our-strategy/gender-guidelines/) or [Technical Assistance Strategy](https://disabilityrightsfund.org/about/our-strategy/technical-assistance-strategy/), our milestones towards those outlined objectives are consistently achieved. We will continue working practically toward this vision of expansion. We agree that DRF/DRAF’s continued growth can only be a benefit for the disability movement. With the economic effects of the COVID-19 global pandemic still unknown at this time, we acknowledge that the timetable for staff growth will shift, but we have our eyes on this goal.

**Recommendation 2:** ***Further strengthen DRF/DRAF’s role within the global movement to promote the human rights of persons with disabilities: develop a global influencing strategy***

*Agree*

Internal conversations around the development of a global influencing strategy to explicitly detail implementation of one of the three main strategies outlined in DRF/DRAF’s Strategic Plan, namely advocacy (the other two strategies being grantmaking and technical assistance), began among the staff in June 2019, as this evaluation started. Having seen the positive impact of explicit guidelines and strategies in the past[[4]](#footnote-5), DRF/DRAF staff proposed and received approval from the board in November 2019 to develop an advocacy strategy during the timeframe of the organizations’ next, revised Strategic Plan (2021-23). Staff positions have been proposed to support implementation of an advocacy strategy, which would include an advocacy lead as well as a dedicated Communications Team to support the sharing of lessons learned to a variety of audiences beyond current donors and grantees.

As confirmed in multiple independent evaluations, including this one, and lessons learned that are coming out of our COVID-19 response, DRF/DRAF is uniquely positioned to amplify the voices of persons with disabilities at global and regional levels, in addition to national levels. With program staff on the ground in our target countries, DRF/DRAF staff have a direct line to what persons with disabilities are experiencing, their needs, their strategies to realize their rights, and their success stories. For example, the Program Team quickly responded to COVID-19 impacts, reviewing the more than 200 active projects in a matter of weeks in order to incorporate requested project changes for DPO-led advocacy messages and efforts related to COVID-19. Program officers and DPOs have been able to see how quickly their stories and information can be highlighted on a global platform through DRF/DRAF and our critical partners( like DFID and DFAT), for instance during a recent webinar on advancement of the SDGs, hosted by DRF/DRAF and featuring a number of our donors for the Skoll World Forum.

**Recommendation 3:** ***Further increase the efficiency and effectiveness of DRF/DRAF’s activities, by revisiting systems and processes***.

*Agree*

This recommendation refers to both grantmaking processes and programmatic engagement with DPOs and grantees as well as operational processes.

In regard to the former, DRF/DRAF began a grantmaking overhaul in early 2019. An external consultant worked with staff with deep knowledge of DRF/DRAF grantmaking to complete an assessment that included a review of relevant grantmaking documents, meetings with the DRF/DRAF Grantmaking Committee, and individual interviews with 14 staff members using a standard interview protocol with 17 questions. A total of 788 comments were recorded and analyzed to provide a set of recommendations on where DRF/DRAF might make improvements in the future. Our Program Director will join our Director of Grants Management and Finance Director in leading the next steps in this important effort toward more streamlined procedures for our grantmaking, with input from all involved in the process.

While the organization has been undergoing the grantmaking overhaul assessment and is developing an implementation plan based on resulting recommendations, the DRF/DRAF Program Team continues to work toward improved engagement with newly emergent and small DPOs to support them through what may be the first grant application process they have engaged in. This includes the piloting of an Eligibility Survey for new applicants, which has been proven to be effective. In the Round 1 2020 grantmaking round, there were 150 survey responses and only approximately 10% of respondents submitted a full application. The survey clearly helped many prospective applicants save time by clarifying that their proposed projects and/or organizational structure would not meet basic eligibility for DRF/DRAF funding.

In addition, DRF/DRAF has piloted Easy to Read versions of the documents that are provided to the Grantmaking Committee to inform their decisions on grant recommendations. We are also aiming to make more of our grantmaking materials accessible to grantees, in addition to documents that are currently available in multiple languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Burmese, and French). Revisions to the grantee oversight process are underway to provide DRF/DRAF Program Officers and grantees with consolidated information that will facilitate monitoring and reporting.

Overall, DRF/DRAF does align its budget to its Strategic Plan and will continue to further examine what broad activities are needed to achieve the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan in any particular year. This analysis will help to create a budget that can be more easily tied to the overall activities in the Strategic Plan, which can also help to track progress over time and allow the organization to pivot to address urgent needs. DRF/DRAF will also explore how to better connect higher level goals in the Strategic Plan to the organizational work plan, which operationalizes annual goals for each team. By doing so, staff will have a better sense of how their work relates to the Strategic Plan. As staff become more familiar with this, they will also better understand how the DRF/DRAF budget directly affects their work and vice versa, which will allow for more effective planning. Over the last couple of years, staff have been more involved in creating the annual budget, and we will continue this engagement to ensure an efficient and effective flow of information throughout the planning process.

**Recommendation 4:** ***Further strengthen DRF/DRAF’s movement building approaches***.

*Agree*

The DRF/DRAF Grantee Convenings have provided a legitimizing space for smaller, emergent, more marginalized DPOs within the mainstream disability movement. While the recognition of diversity within the disability community takes time, we have seen marginalized persons with disabilities gain official government recognition as specific impairment groups and even gain seats on national umbrella DPO boards. Additionally, support from donors has allowed for targeted movement building activities. This includes funding from DFAT for the piloting of specific convenings of marginalized persons with disabilities to gain confidence in their advocacy skills and knowledge and to formulate specific strategies for outreach to other human rights movements, as well as anonymous donor support for targeted capacity development of emergent DPOs and self-help groups that have added to the diversification of the movement in Uganda. While this report was being written, a new WhatsApp group for grantees in Uganda was formed, and the exchange during the COVID-19 global pandemic has been particularly beneficial to the DPOs, as they learn from one another’s advocacy efforts and develop collective actions that include marginalized groups.

**Recommendation 5:** ***Further strengthen DRF/DRAF’s approaches to helping DPOs strengthen their capacity***.

*Partially agree*

At its inception, with the input of persons with disabilities on its Board and Global Advisory Panel, DRF/DRAF made a strategic decision to invest its limited resources on capacity building in advocacy and rights knowledge rather than general managerial, financial, or fundraising capacity. Accordingly, DRF/DRAF developed a Technical Assistance strategy aimed at increasing the rights advocacy capacity of grantees in specific areas based on a strengths assessment. The organization holds itself accountable for these investments and this goal through specific indicators in the DRF/DRAF logical framework. Program Officers are hired in part based on their advocacy expertise, skills, and knowledge, which is a different skill set from organizational capacity building.

Nonetheless, recognizing the need for organizational support, DRF/DRAF Program Officers provide indirect support as part of their oversight of and support to grantees. While this report was being written a new WhatsApp group for grantees in Uganda was formed, and the exchange during the COVID-19 global pandemic with DRF/DRAF staff has been particularly beneficial to the DPOs. Additionally, DRF/DRAF began a pilot in 2020 to research civil society actors at a national level whose mission includes organizational capacity development, particularly regarding safeguarding, financial management, and budget oversight.

In regards to grantee monitoring and learning and contributing to the limited body of knowledge on how disability rights are achieved, as mentioned above, DRF/DRAF is committed to increasing lessons learned both for broader development and human rights funders and among those within the disability movement. For example, relevant findings from this independent evaluation and the concurrent independent evaluation on DRF/DRAF contributions to the disability movement in the Pacific are being condensed into a document aimed for DPO use to enhance their advocacy. The document will be translated into an Easy to Read version and multiple languages (Bahasa Indonesia, Burmese, and French) based on the national languages of DRF/DRAF target countries.

**Recommendation 6:** ***Seek out more ways to mainstream marginalized DPOs***.

*Agree*

DRF/DRAF are committed to continuing partnership with DPOs representing marginalized groups of persons with disabilities, particularly since we are some of the few donors to make grants to ‘high risk,’ newly emergent organizations. Additionally, DRF/DRAF continue to direct support to women with disabilities through the implementation of the organizations’ Gender Guidelines. Already in numerous target countries, DRF/DRAF grantees are gaining more legitimacy and voice in other human rights movements, such as the women’s rights movements and Indigenous Peoples’ rights movements.

We know there are many other movements that intersect with the rights of persons with disabilities and need to become more inclusive. We also acknowledge that the mainstreaming of disability rights within human rights movements requires response and outreach from other rights advocates, civil society, donors, and government officials.

Within the disability movement, DRF/DRAF will continue the work with national umbrella DPOs in target countries to provide one-on-one grantee oversight and input into the complicated roles national umbrella DPOs play in both building up the movement and galvanizing a united front for persons with disabilities.

**Recommendation 7:** ***Articulate DRF/DRAF’s programmatic sequencing and exit strategy***.

*Agree*

In the early years of DRF/DRAF’s history, country engagement was conceptualized as three 2-year stages of investment for a total of 6-years of country engagement. With a much longer history of effectiveness and advocacy achievements, DRF/DRAF is poised to continue its growth and needs to revisit this 6-year commitment to assess longer stages of engagement. More than a decade of presence in target countries such as Indonesia, the Pacific, and Uganda have shown that effective partnership with grassroots DPOs does require longer-term commitments.

In November 2012, DRF/DRAF developed a comprehensive exit strategy to guide its departure from countries. DRF/DRAF reexamine this exit strategy as needed and continue to engage with other development partners to make investments in DPOs as a part of their mission. New four-year commitments from DFID and DFAT will be incorporated into these decisions.

As a pooled fund, these decisions depend in part on the reliability of funding for longer-term commitments to disability movements in target countries and engagement with the disability movement in countries that have been exited.

**DRAF/DRF Commitment**

The staff and Board of DRF/DRAF are fully committed to our mission and to our partners and the mutual learning that is critical to sustain all efforts to advocate for the rights of persons with disabilities. Accordingly, we will continue to be open and responsive to adapt to new opportunities, improve our practices, and respond to the needs of our grantees.

We commit to adjusting as appropriate and possible the processes and country-level strategies that DPOs, national governments, and other stakeholders raised through this evaluation. To hold ourselves accountable to the DPOs that participated in this evaluation and provided their input and insights, relevant staff at DRF/DRAF will conduct a bi-annual reflection process on the uptake of relevant recommendations and will inform relevant partners of progress in these areas as requested.

1. For more information about BLE Solutions, please see [www.blesolutions.com](http://www.blesolutions.com). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. DRF/DRAF’s Grantmaking Committee (GMC) is a committee established by the boards of directors of DRF and DRAF. Its purpose is to support DRF and DRAF in pooled fund grantmaking strategy review and grants decisions. The GMC is made up of representatives from DRF/DRAF institutional donors and from the global disability community, as well as three board members. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. This may raise questions about the possibility of positive bias in grantees’ responses to the evaluation team, as noted in the evaluation limitations. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. When DRF/DRAF makes its strategies explicit through guiding documents, such as its Technical Assistance Strategy, Gender Guidelines, or Grantmaking Guidelines, milestone and targets for related logframe indicators are consistently achieved. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)