

2023 Annual Report

Unlocking the Possibilities of Inclusion



Dear Friends and Partners,

We are excited to share Disability Rights Fund (DRF) and Disability Rights Advocacy Fund's (DRAF) 2023 annual report, **Unlocking the Possibilities of Inclusion**. This report is a celebration of DRF's milestones and the advocacy journeys and strides of grassroots organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) across the Global South. This past year has been a critical one for us as we created our visionary five-year strategic plan: [Disability-Led Futures for a Just World: DRF's Path to 2029](#). We thank Catalina Devandas, our former Executive Director, for her leadership in guiding our new strategic plan.

Our participatory process deepened our connections and reaffirmed our new vision: **Disability Rights for Everyone, Everywhere**. As we begin implementing our strategic plan, we remain committed to embracing an intersectional approach, recognizing our interdependence and celebrating the richness of human diversity along the way.

In 2023, DRF movement partners rallied for their rights across intersecting issues—from inclusive climate action to gender justice—amplifying the voices of those on the margins, such as persons with DeafBlindness and persons with albinism. **Together, we celebrated landmark achievements, including the Solomon Islands' ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. In Malawi, our

partners rejoiced as the government adopted a new Persons with Disabilities Act, paving the way for genuine inclusion. **These victories are the result of years of tireless advocacy!**

In 2023, we also received an unprecedented \$8 million gift from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott—a landmark investment coming at a critical moment when the funding landscape is narrowing.

We invite you to explore the stories and successes in this report, which highlight the diverse leadership and innovative advocacy solutions of disability rights advocates around the world.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all supporters and global grantee partners. Your generosity and commitment make our work possible, strengthening and diversifying disability rights movements.

With hope,



Lorraine Wapling
Interim Executive
Director,
Disability
Rights Fund



Values



We celebrate **human diversity** and **disability pride**.



We value the **participation, access, and inclusion** of all persons with disabilities to promote human rights.



We embrace **learning** from success and failure as a powerful means of transformation.



We bring an **intersectional feminist** approach to our work.



We base our relationships on **collaboration, solidarity, interdependence, joy, and accountability**.

Values in Action: Our Model

64%

of our team members identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or Persons of Color.

52%

of our grantmaking from the regular cycle was awarded to marginalized identities within disability rights movements.

100%

of our board members identify as persons with disabilities.



"संसार, जहाँ बहिरा नागरिकहरुले जहिले पनि सङ्केत गर्न सक्छन्"
"A World Where Deaf People Everywhere Can Sign Anywhere"



साङ्केतिक भाषाहरुको अन्तर्राष्ट्रिय दिवस तथा बहिरा सप्ताह २०८० का अवसरमा
बहिरा नागरिकहरुको पहिचान तथा अधिकारका लागि आयोजित

जनचेतनामूलक च्याली

मिति: २०८० साल असोज ६ गते शनिबार
स्थान: भृकुटीमण्डप, काठमाण्डौ

आयोजक
राष्ट्रिय बहिरा महासंघ नेपाल

Members of Deaf Federation Nepal lead a rally on the International Day of Sign Languages.



Celebrating Movement Wins & Strides

In 2023, we witnessed remarkable transformations led by diverse disability rights movements in the Global South. From Nigeria to Malawi, Nepal to Fiji, these advocacy strides reflect the growing strength and leadership of the disability movement and advocates, driving forward a shared vision of a more inclusive world.

Here are a few 2023 grantee milestones:



After years of grassroots movement building and advocacy, the government of **Malawi adopted a new Persons with Disabilities Act.**



And there's more good news from Malawi! The government also **ratified the African Disability Protocol (ADP)**, opening doors for meaningful action. We are thrilled that all governments in our target countries have now ratified the ADP.



Indonesian Mental Health Association (IMHA) drafted a policy paper to **ensure the rights of persons with disabilities are reflected in the national bill on climate action.** IMHA also continues to foster dialogues between the disability and environmental justice movements, engaging in research on the impacts of climate change on persons with disabilities.



Ratifying the African Disability Protocol is crucial for Malawi as it strengthens the legal framework for disability rights and affirms the government's commitment to recognizing and protecting the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities. This action lays the foundation for an inclusive society, ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens to participate in the economy and to contribute to national development."

Chrissy Zimba
Program Officer
for Malawi



- The National Union of Disabled Persons of Uganda's (NUDIPU) advocacy led to the formation of the Parliamentary Forum for Persons with Disabilities, **creating a powerful channel for inclusive policy advocacy in Parliament.**
- Center for Citizens with Disabilities made a stakeholder submission to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism and contributed to **improved accessible aviation and service delivery at airports in Nigeria.**
- Given Nepal's vulnerability to climate change, **DRF grantee partners advocated for inclusive climate action for persons with disabilities** from Indigenous and remote rural Himalayan communities.
- The Rwandan government **officially accepted the National Sign Language Dictionary**, developed by grantee, Rwanda National Association of the Deaf.
- DRF grantee, **OHANA participated in Civil Society (C20) in India**, speaking at a side session on the intersection of disability, gender, and equity.

“ People with disabilities continue to face inequality and discrimination due to war, natural disasters, climate change, and poverty. This is why OHANA built a national coalition with PRAKARSA to increase the participation of OPDs to promote inclusive international development and cooperation within the G20 leaders.”

OHANA member



- OHANA members spoke at a C20 side session on the intersection of disability, gender, and equity.

Advancing Rights in Adversity: Resourcing Disability Advocacy in Haiti



In the face of humanitarian emergencies and political upheaval, Haitian disability rights activists continued to persevere for their rights. DRF's support of grantees in Haiti extended well beyond financial assistance. Recognizing the complex environment in which disability rights organizations operate, we continued to provide comprehensive, tailored support to ensure their sustainability and effectiveness.



This included personalized coaching and technical assistance, enabling grantees to navigate obstacles and optimize their impact. Grantees, Association des Femmes Handicapées du Sud and Association des Handicapés du Nord Est, developed comprehensive emergency management plans to better prepare for humanitarian emergencies and climate crises. And grantees, like Association pour la Promotion du Droit et l'Intégration des Personnes Handicapées du Sud (APDIPHIS) and Réseau Associatif National pour l'Intégration des Personnes Handicapées (RANIPH) strengthened their internal governance and trained stakeholders, including the Ministry of Education, on inclusive education and disability rights.



In the face of intersecting crises, members of APDIPHIS (top) RANIPH (bottom) have advocated for inclusive education and accessibility of the built environment.

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CONAPH mobilized its members to advocate for inclusive responses to humanitarian emergencies and climate change.



“DRF also actively facilitated connections with other donors and shared growth opportunities, broadening the support network available to Haitian OPDs. Furthermore, we worked closely with grantees to enhance their organizational capacity, refine their advocacy strategies, and strengthen their ability to engage in national forums. Through this multi-pronged strategy, we supported grantees to continue advancing the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in Haiti amidst significant challenges.”

Jo-Ann Garnier, Program Officer for Haiti



Accompanying Movements on their Advocacy Journeys: Spotlight on the Solomon Islands

We are celebrating the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by the Solomon Islands. Since 2010, DRAF, our sister fund, has supported this advocacy, underscoring the importance of accompanying movements on their long journeys for inclusion.

“Over the years, we have engaged with different ministries with the hope that disability is not in a silo under the Ministry of Health,” shared Simon Dolaiano, President of People with Disabilities Solomon Islands.

Looking ahead, some of the movement's key priorities include advocating for inclusive climate and disaster-risk reduction policies, as well as centering the voices of persons with disabilities from marginalized identities, such as those with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities. Simon also emphasized the need to build solidarity and deepen collaboration across disability rights movements in the Pacific. His call to action for donors: **Embrace flexibility when engaging with OPDs in the Pacific and have curiosity to understand the unique political and cultural contexts of their disability rights movements.**

“ The ratification matters, because it recognizes the value of every human being. The government is now obligated to report on its progress to promote disability rights. This also gives us hope to have a national disability rights act in the future. We need equity to be the fabric of our society.”

Simon Dolaiano

President, People with Disabilities Solomon Islands



Peer and Collective Learning in Pacific Island Nations



DRF co-hosted a grantee convening in Fiji with the Pacific Disability Forum, which gathered **32 OPDs from 11 Pacific Islands nations!** This gathering celebrated a uniquely Pacific movement for inclusion—one that’s deeply embedded in the rich cultural heritage and Indigenous values of collective wellbeing. From Bougainville to Palau, a diversity of disability advocates gathered to share stories, successful advocacy strategies, and challenges they face to advocate for disability rights. From inclusive climate and gender justice to economic security, Pacific OPDs are advocating for the full participation of persons with disabilities to build just communities.

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➤ The Pacific convening celebrated a ‘homegrown’ disability rights movement.



Sign language interpreters signed in six sign languages at the Pacific convening.



We were energized to see an abundance of **women-led OPDs in the Pacific** working on the intersection of inclusion, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), psychosocial health, climate justice, and more. An impressive **30% of the advocates at the gathering were youth with disabilities**—a promising sign for the future. Last but not the least, we were thrilled to be joined by the **Disability Pride Hub, the very first LGBTQI-led OPD in the Pacific.**



As a proud Samoan woman with a disability, I am filled with joy witnessing our shared power and unity at this Pacific grantee convening. We have come a long way, and our journey is far from over to realize our bold Pacific visions for inclusion. We are on fire, and we will not be left behind! Now, it's time for donors and development actors to break their silos and deliver on their promises on intersectionality!"

Faaolo Utumapu-Utailesolo

Program Officer for Pacific Island Nations





The Story of Our New Brand

DRF's new brand identity is a bold reflection of our commitment to inclusion and the power of grassroots disability rights movements. Our refreshed logo symbolizes the diversity and journeys of these movements, with rays representing unity, convergence, and collective action.

The creation of this new brand was a collaborative and participatory process, enriched by the insights and voices of our global staff, grantees, donors, and board members. Throughout this journey, they expressed how vital and vibrant DRF's work is, emphasizing that the evolution of our organization mirrors the blossoming progress of global disability rights movements. Together, we are advancing the vision of 'Nothing About Us Without Us' and moving toward a more just and inclusive world for all.



“ This dynamic design aligns with DRF's core values of deepening solidarity and working together for disability-led futures, capturing our vision of 'Disability Rights for Everyone Everywhere.'”

Rucha Chitnis, Communications Director



Rucha (right) with Indonesian activist, Ariani Soekanwo.

Our Impact

In 2023, an independent external evaluation was completed, which reviewed DRF and DRAF activities between 2019-2022. Through a participatory design process, we gathered evidence on the impact of technical assistance DRF and DRAF provided to OPDs. We also explored diversity fostered within disability movements, particularly gender inclusion. We also examined how grantees in Fiji, Indonesia, and Nigeria contributed to advocacy wins ranging from inclusive elections to gender-based violence prevention and outlined these wins in six spotlight stories.

It is clear that the advocacy wins of OPDs are dependent on contributing factors, like organizational capacity, governments' understanding of disability rights, and the advocacy skills of disability activists.

Demonstrating our commitment to best practices in evaluation, DRF provided a management response and ensured the findings were accessible by translating the report into Bahasa, French, and Easy Read formats. You can explore the full report and spotlight stories on [‘Our Impact’](#) page of DRF’s new website.



Nigerian OPDs advocated for disability-inclusive response to COVID-19.

Grantee Testimonial

“ With DRF’s support, the Indonesia Mental Health Association (IMHA) has become a recognized disability rights organization in Indonesia. IMHA has successfully mainstreamed psychosocial disability issues into the national disability rights agenda. We have been at the forefront of many cross-disability advocacy efforts, such as the Sexual Violence Bill, climate change, and social protection policies.”

Yeni Rosa Damayanti

Chairperson,
Indonesia Mental Health
Association



Grantee Testimonial

“Founding the first Dalit with disabilities-led organization gives us the opportunity to advocate for our rights, dignity, and respect. This is a historical milestone for us as we are one of the most marginalized and underrepresented groups in Nepal. The support of DRF has been instrumental for us to organize, create our vision, and move forward to claim our rights and remove intersectional barriers that we have faced within and beyond the movement. We value DRF’s commitment to partnering with underrepresented groups whose voices must be heard and mainstreamed.”

Pampha Purkoti

Acting President of Dalit
with Disabilities Association



Shifting the Power for Inclusion: Donor Perspectives on DRF

“DFAT values our longstanding partnership with DRAF. This has helped us support the leadership and work of grassroots OPDs, including of women with disabilities in all their diversity. DRAF has supported OPDs to mobilize diverse and at-risk populations to strengthen diversity in the disability rights movement in Indonesia and the Pacific. DRAF has supported OPDs to have a strong platform to contribute to critical regional and global advocacy, and to contribute to the consultation process for DFAT policy and strategy work, including Australia’s forthcoming International Disability Equity and Rights Strategy.”

Sarah Goulding

Former Assistant Secretary and
Principal Specialist Gender Equality,
Department of Foreign Affairs and
Trade (DFAT), Australia



Donor Perspectives on DRF

“ I can see the embedded commitment DRF has to funding disabled-led intersectional projects in the Global South, and I’m all about that! It’s about disabled people believing in and supporting each other to create the world we want—both envisioning that within our organizing and other fields of work, as well as ‘out there’ in public.”

Áine Kelly-Costello

Storyteller, Researcher, Advocate



Gratitude

We extend our gratitude to all our donors for generously resourcing movements and our organizations.

DRF was supported by United States Department of State's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL); U.K. Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; Adobe Foundation; the Ansara Family Fund at the Boston Foundation; Channel Foundation; Dreilinden; Expedia Group; the Jacob & Hilda Blaustein Foundation; Ford Foundation; Foundation for a Just Society; the Global Fund for Women; Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation; MacKenzie Scott; Mina Fund; Oak Foundation; Schmidt Family Foundation; WE Trust; and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund.

A big thanks as well to our individual donors for resourcing inclusion.

DRAF was supported by the Government of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Robert Bosch Stiftung.

The views expressed in this communication do not necessarily reflect the official policies of any of our donors or the governments they represent. See our [current donor list here](#).



“ When DRF began, our resource mobilization focused on fundraising to support OPDs. Now, after 15 years, it’s about more than just securing funds for DRF—it’s about advocating for donors to be more inclusive and flexible in their funding and mobilizing resources for the movement.”

Jen Bokoff, Director of Development

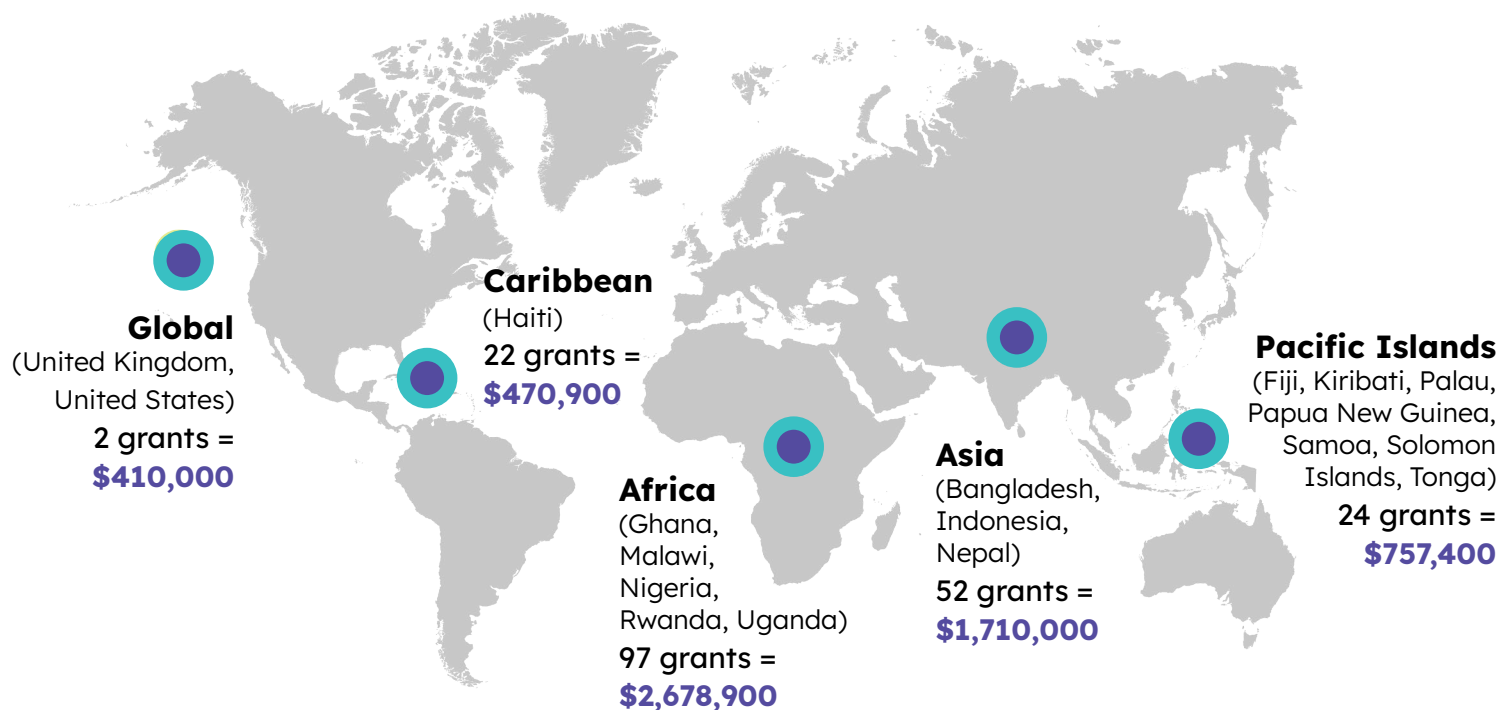
Grantmaking Data

In 2023, DRF and DRAF awarded

197 grants to
142 organizations



\$6,027,200
USD



[Click here to view the full directory of 2023 grants](#)

2023 Financials

	DRF	DRAF	Total	%
Revenue				
Restricted				
Government	\$1,244,722	\$1,745,552	\$2,990,274	19%
Foundations	\$1,892,677	\$158,985	\$2,051,662	13%
Unrestricted				
Foundations, Corporate, Individuals	\$10,609,882		\$10,609,882	68%
Total Revenue	\$13,747,281	\$1,904,537	\$15,651,818	100%

Operating Expenses				
Program Services - Grant Awards and Oversight	\$5,920,716	\$2,060,941	\$7,981,657	71%
General and Administrative	\$2,670,697	\$103,115	\$2,773,812	25%
Fundraising	\$381,220	\$28,288	\$409,508	4%
Total Expenses	\$8,972,633	\$2,192,344	\$11,164,977	100%



Grantmaking Committee

Our Grantmaking Committee (GMC) makes all pooled funds' grantmaking decisions and inform our grantmaking priorities. Committee members are a mix of disability rights activists and donor representatives.

Current GMC members

Nikki Brown-Booker

Nandini Ghosh

Ishumael Zhou

Waqar Puri

Helena Woods

Susannah Rodgers

We extend our gratitude to former committee member Myroslava Tataryn for her invaluable contributions.



Members of Organization for Integration and Promotion of People with Albinism celebrate International Albinism Awareness Day.





Current Board of Directors

Maria Ní Fhlatharta (Co-Chair)

Alberto Vásquez (Co-Chair)

Setareki S. Macanawai

Sikelelwa Alexandrina Msitshana

Michael Njenga (Treasurer)

Michael Szporluk

Andrew Ferren (Board Clerk)

We thank former board members

Beth MacNairn, Charlie Clements, Maureen Lister, Mariel Gonzales, and Andrew Ferren. Andrew currently serves as our Board Clerk. We also thank Lorraine Wapling, our former board co-chair, for eight years of committed service. Lorraine currently serves as our Interim Executive Director.

“2023 has been a year of exciting evolution and growth as we laid the groundwork for the future. We’ve worked tirelessly on our new strategic plan, which will usher in a new chapter for our organizations. As we continue to build on our participatory model, we are thrilled to see collective care and more thematic approaches becoming central to our work, complementing our focus on marginalized communities. These are transformative times, and we’re eager to continue fostering partnerships and innovative approaches while growing our impact.”

Maria Ní Fhlatharta and Alberto Vásquez
DRF Board Co-Chairs



A Great Team Manifests Our Dreams!

Current Staff Members



We thank all DRF team members

for their profound contributions to our organizations last year. DRF's hardworking and committed team powers our movement, operations, learning and growth divisions. We thank former staff members, Catalina Devandas, Faith Lemon, Alice Phinizy, Jack Kretzmer, and Christina Parasyn for their dedicated service to DRF.

[View bios of current team members here.](#)

Credits

This report was produced by Rucha Chitnis, DRF's Communications Director. We thank all our team members for contributing to this publication.

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- Photos by Rucha Chitnis on pages 5, 8 (bottom), 9, 10, 11, 13, 23 (several staff portraits) and cover photos
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The Disability Rights Fund is a 501c3 organization, EIN 27-5026293.

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Platinum
Transparency
2023

Candid.