



Disability Rights Advocacy Fund's submission to DFAT on the New International Gender Equality Strategy

The Disability Rights Advocacy Fund (DRAF)¹ has been a partner of DFAT since 2009. Partnering with DRAF has enabled DFAT to both address stated development objectives and internal strategies on disability-inclusive development, as well as ensure that foreign aid commitments are in accordance with Article 32 (international cooperation) and Article 11 (situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies) of the CRPD, which Australia ratified in 2008, and in line with the leave no one behind principle of Agenda 2030.

DRAF and the Disability Rights Fund (DRF) work in partnership with the Australian Disability and Development Consortium (ADDC) and endorse the submission of ADDC and recommendations made therein. The link to ADDC's submission is: <https://www.addc.org.au/file/submission-to-the-international-gender-equality-strategy/>.

In line with the guidance provided by DFAT for submissions to input into the development of your new International Gender Equality Strategy, we would like to share our DRAF's [Gender Guidelines Implementation Plan](#), that may serve as a model for an effective approach to promoting gender equality.

DRAF and DRF's past evaluations informed our need for an articulated strategy on gender and integration of a gender transformative approach across all our work². This led to the publication of our first set of Gender Guidelines³ in 2018, followed by a multi-year process to operationalize these Guidelines to increasingly center our commitment to gender transformation in every aspect of our work and our advocacy.

In 2022, we released a public facing version of our [Gender Guidelines Implementation Plan](#). By sharing how we are applying a gender transformative approach across all of our work – grantmaking, advocacy, technical assistance and organisational learning – we hope it helps other funders embark on a similar journey. Our work at the intersection of gender and disability has been recognised by various philanthropic actors and has resulted in new funding given to us to specifically advance our work at this intersection by donors like the US State Department, Channel Foundation, Foundation for a Just Society and the Global Fund for Women. **We are happy to dialogue more with DFAT should you have further questions about our progress, approaches and lessons learned.**

¹ DRAF supports organizations of persons with disabilities in the Global South, including across Indonesia and 14 Pacific Island Countries (PICs), to advance legal frameworks to realize the rights of persons with disabilities. DRAF's sister organization, the Disability Rights Fund (DRF), supports persons with disabilities around the world to build diverse movements, ensure inclusive development agendas, and achieve equal rights and opportunity for all. As participatory organisations, DRAF and DRF include persons with disabilities in decision-making at all organisational levels, from governance to staffing, and carries through to how we design our grantmaking, technical assistance and advocacy approaches.

² Universalis, [DRF External Evaluation](#), 2013

³ DRF, [Gender Guidelines](#), 2008

Below, we have outlined the impact of the Gender Guidelines Implementation Plan in key areas of DRAF and DRF's work.

Grantmaking: dedicated resourcing of organizations working at the intersection of gender, disability and sexuality has yielded significant results:

- We saw a 10% year-over-year increase in grantmaking to organisations of women with disabilities and organisations of persons with disabilities of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), which represented over 30% of our overall grantmaking in 2023.⁴ This is an exciting and noteworthy shift, especially as it included several new organisations. We also added a gender priority area to our grantmaking guidelines, and 42% of our pooled fund grants reflected that priority during the same time period.
- Two examples of grantees from the Pacific working at the intersection of gender, disability and sexuality are **Women with Disabilities Network Papua New Guinea, Inc.**—an emergent, unregistered group of women with disabilities working toward a socially just, accessible and inclusive society—and the **Disability Pride Hub**—an emergent, unregistered group of persons with disabilities of diverse SOGIESC in Fiji working to foster inclusion and respect for diversity across both movements. Since 2022, we have expanded grantmaking across our focus countries to support projects that explicitly address the rights of LGBTQI+ persons with disabilities, including in countries where same-sex acts are criminalised by the law.
- DRAF/DRF continued funding the [National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal \(NIDWAN\)](#) to continue their advocacy at the intersection of gender, disability, and indigenous rights. NIDWAN:
 - Contributed to the [CEDAW General Recommendation No. 39 \(2022\)](#) on the rights of Indigenous women and girls, which included with 30 references to disability and women and girls with disabilities.
 - Contributed a joint submission to the [CEDAW Committee's Half Day of General Discussion on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems](#), focusing on the representation of women with disabilities in decision-making at all levels.
 - Contributed to a joint submission to the [CRPD Committee's Day of General Discussion on Article 11](#), which focused on persons with disabilities in risk and humanitarian emergencies.
 - co-organised a side event at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP27) in the Indigenous Peoples Pavilion entitled 'Indigenous People with Disabilities: The Frontline for Inclusive Climate Solutions' jointly with the International Indigenous Peoples' Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) and SustainedAbility.
- At the global level, through their existing DRAF/DRF Strategic Partnership grant, Women Enabled International (WEI) continued to build the Inclusive Generation Equality Collective (IGEC), a group of feminists with disabilities and key stakeholders (UN Women, etc.) to promote inclusion. The Collective finalised the [Feminist Accessibility Protocol](#), which outlines

⁴ This increase will be slower to show up on our logframe, which tracks our indicators *cumulatively* over time rather than year by year. Even with the number of women and SOGIESC-diverse OPD grantees increasing, this still represents 15% of our grantmaking over time. This percentage will be challenging to shift because we're giving out so much more money across far more grants than ever.

steps that governments, UN entities and others must take to ensure the inclusiveness of future gender equality processes, convenings and conversations. We contributed financial and technical support to the IGEC's launch of the Feminist Accessibility Protocol at the 67th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67). DRAF/DRF's Senior Advisor, Inclusion and Accessibility spoke at the launch event, organised by WEI in partnership with DRAF/DRF, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland and CREA.

We stand by to connect you with these impactful organisations working at the intersection of gender and disability to inform your discussions.

Advocacy: resourcing feminist leaders from Global South OPDs to occupy key decision-making spaces at regional and global levels is helping to re-imagine the world we want to live in and enabling the co-creation of human rights agendas.

DRAF/DRF Resourced Record Submissions for Advocacy: DRF's advocacy and program team supported a network of global grantees, including from the Asia-Pacific region, to submit over 25 written and oral submissions to various United Nations human rights mechanisms, like the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, focusing on country reviews as well as specific themes, such as climate action and the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making. Spanning OPDs from Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands, this record number of submissions eclipsed our collective numbers for the first nine years of DRAF/DRF's existence!

Solidarity for inclusion led by women and girls with disabilities. We share below various events at international advocacy spaces we organised or co-hosted like the Conference of States Parties to the CRPD (COSP15, COSP16), the Global Disability Summit (GDS22), CSW66 and Women Deliver to amplify the leadership of women with disabilities in their communities.

- DRAF/DRF led a parallel event at CSW66 titled “Key Intersections: Gender, Disability and Climate Change” along with IDA, Global Affairs Canada and Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland. It was also co-sponsored by UN Women, UNPRPD and Ford Foundation. Speakers at the event included representatives from DRAF/DRF grantees Indonesian Association of Women with Disabilities and the National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal (NIDWAN), as well as from IDA, GAC, MFA Finland and UN Women. The English recording of the event is available [here](#). Given the theme of COSP15 that year, a similar side event was organized. The English recording of our COSP15 side event is available [here](#).
- At CSW66, we also co-organised a parallel event with WEI titled “[Climate change advocacy at the intersection of gender and disability](#).” This event was focused on the Pacific region and was co-sponsored by DFAT and UNFPA. Speakers at the event included women with disabilities (mostly first-time speakers) representing DRAF/DRF grantees [Lavamea Taeiloa Disabled People Association](#), [Vanuatu Disability Promotion and Advocacy Association](#) and [People with Disabilities Solomon Islands](#), as well as DFAT, UNFPA and WEI.
- At COSP16, together with WEI, DRAF/DRF co-organised a side to launch the [Resource Guide on Strengthening Gender Inclusion in Disability Rights Spaces](#), which was authored by WEI and supported by DRAF/DRF. It gathered women and gender-diverse people with disabilities to share the challenges to, and success factors for gender inclusion in disability rights spaces, including, among others, representatives of [Women with Disabilities Development Foundation](#), Bangladesh and the [Fiji Disabled People's Federation](#).
- At Women Deliver 2023, together with WEI and PDF, DRAF/DRF organised a virtual session entitled “[Inclusive Sexual and Reproductive Health: Good Practices from the Pacific](#)”, bringing together leaders from the Pacific disability rights movement to share how they have

pioneered and developed inclusive sexual and reproductive health services and related advocacy. The event was opened by Stephanie Copus Campbell, DFAT Ambassador for Gender Equality and included speakers from [Fiji Disabled People's Federation](#), Women with Disability Empowerment Association Solomon Islands, UNFPA, and DRAF/DRF's PICs Program Officer from Samoa.

Technical Assistance: resourcing intra- and inter-movement learning and expertise is helping to shift power and narrative around who holds critical expertise on gender and disability rights, equity and inclusion. Through our Technical Assistance (TA) – offered as direct grants, as well as trainings and peer exchanges - we have supported grantees to deepen their knowledge on issues of gender and sexuality, as well as around Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment. As a feminist funder, we also support opportunities for collective care amongst the disability movement. For example:

- Prompted by grantee feedback, we worked with grantees to trial a series of grantee-led virtual Pacific Talanoa with OPDs, where OPDs engaged with each other in peer-to-peer exchanges focused on movement-determined priorities. The Women with Disabilities Association in Papua New Guinea facilitated a Talanoa on advancing the rights of women with disabilities. Disability Pride Hub in Fiji shared their experiences as persons with disabilities of diverse SOGIESC.
- Recognizing the significant hardship and exclusion experienced by persons with disabilities in Indonesia during the global pandemic, [Yayasan Sentra Advokasi Perempuan Difabel Dan Anak](#) facilitated a five-session learning exchange focused on personal wellbeing during COVID-19. Sessions included trauma healing and relaxation techniques, improving immunity, First Psychological Aid for colleagues who are experiencing stress and ways to support persons with disabilities in the vaccine roll out. “During the sessions I came to know others are feeling the same during the pandemic, and it makes me stronger as a person and as an advocate for persons with disabilities,” shared Junia Rendi of [Perkumpulan Penyandang Disabilitas Indonesia Central Kalimantan](#).
- Through our strategic partnership with the Disability Justice Project (DJP), we have equipped 20 fellows (all persons with disabilities, 75 per cent of fellows are women with disabilities) from DRAF/DRF target countries in Africa and Asia Pacific with tools and skills to tell their own stories, in their own voices, through participatory journalism. The DJP is working with the fellows to create a global grassroots media network to generate sustained attention to the disability justice movement and to centre the voices of persons with disabilities in breaking news on the frontlines of disability justice. The [DJP website](#) features articles and videos produced by fellows and other DRAF/DRF grantees.
- DRAF/DRF's strategic partnership grantee, WEI partnered with youth activists with disabilities to co-develop a series of dynamic, digital and accessible youth-friendly resources to empower new and emerging activists. The resources are available at the following links: [Digital Action Pack](#) and an [Interactive Glossary](#). To advance towards a feminist disability rights movement, we also supported WEI's research on [Gender Inclusion in Disability Rights Spaces](#), a resource guide that highlights the barriers to gender inclusion in disability rights spaces around the world, shares good practices and provides recommendations for a variety of disability rights spaces and actors.

Organisational learning: As DFAT explores its strategies for increasing internal capabilities to deliver on its strategies, we share with you some ways we are increasing our internal capabilities to implement a gender transformative approach. We have taken internal and external steps to deepen our own team’s knowledge of these issues.

- We have a DRAF/DRF Gender Transformation Learning Group to monitor, facilitate and track further progress of our Gender Guidelines Implementation Plan. Members of the group include disability and feminist activists as well as feminist evaluation specialists. Internally, we also use an internal monitoring tool that tracks developments in grantmaking, TA, advocacy, M&E, communications, and staff training related to the gender guidelines implementation plan.
- DRAF/DRF has recently formed an internal Working Group on Solidarity with LGBTQI+ communities. The group objectives are to lead DRAF/DRF on LGBTQI+ issues, by promoting discussions and learning opportunities for staff, Board, and Grantmaking Committee, to create/strengthen internal procedures, advocacy and partnerships that foster solidarity and support to LGBTQI+ persons, and to create a safe and inclusive climate for LGBTQI-identified grantees and staff. In 2024, we plan to engage grantees working to advance the rights of LGBTQI persons with disabilities as a co-learning strategy.
- Our staff attend and have been invited back as resource persons to facilitate sessions in CREA’s Disability, Sexuality and Rights Online Institute, titled “*Disability and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: Accessing Health, Rights and Pleasure*.” Our staff also attend the annual University of Galway’s International Disability Law Summer School, and have led and participated in sessions on gender, SOGIESC diversity and disability.
- Our Program Officers also represent DRAF/DRF at key feminist events, including, most recently in 2023, Women Deliver Conference, Urgent Action Fund Africa’s annual Feminist Republik Festival 2023, and Feminist Funded 23 Rising, and share learning upon return.

Additional resources: In addition to the resources shared above, DRAF/DRF also published the following resource as a guidance for donors interested in funding at the intersection of disability, sexuality and gender.

- **Supporting Inclusive Movements: Funding the Rights of Women with Disabilities** (*produced in partnership with the Chanel Foundation*). Leading advocates and women’s rights donors agree that much more can and needs to be done to include women with disabilities in women’s rights activism, agenda setting, and funding. This brief explores funding at the intersection of women’s rights and disability rights and offers steps donors can take to ensure that their grantmaking is more inclusive of women with disabilities and to support this emerging movement. Download the brief in [PDF](#) or in an accessible [Word](#) document.