



HRAP ALUMNI IMPACT SURVEY 2026





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HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES PROGRAM
Alumni Impact Survey

INTRODUCTION

Since 1989, the Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP) at the Institute for the Study of Human Rights (ISHR) at Columbia University has been a leading capacity-building program for grassroots human rights advocates working on a wide range of issues around the world. The four core pillars of the program – coursework, skill-building, networking, and faculty mentoring – form the foundation of the semester-long HRAP experience. Graduates of HRAP emerge with the knowledge, skills, relationships, and strategic frameworks necessary to strengthen their work.

As HRAP approaches its 40th anniversary in 2029, we asked alumni to participate in an online survey geared towards understanding how their HRAP experience has shaped their work and organizations in the years since. This report presents the findings of that survey, offering candid advocate reflections on HRAP's lasting impact, its continued relevance in the human rights landscape, and the opportunities that they believe can enhance the program for future advocates.



2013 Advocate Musola Cathrine Kaseketi



2011 Advocate Salima Namusobya



2021-22 HRAP Cohort

KEY FINDINGS OVERVIEW

- 63 advocates from 34 different countries and 24 different cohorts responded
- 32 alumni currently hold leadership positions in their organization
- 89% of respondents support communities in the Global Majority
- 97% state that HRAP had a transformative or significant effect on their overall capacity as an advocate
- 86% report their networking and coalition building skills were greatly strengthened because of HRAP
- 84% attribute personal growth to HRAP
- 51% have launched a new program or initiative since participating in the program
- 20% created a new NGO after HRAP
- 52% raised funding for their organization through connections made in HRAP
- 97% have already recommended the program to other advocates

OBJECTIVES & METHODS

OBJECTIVES OF THE SURVEY

As HRAP approaches its 40th anniversary in 2029, we asked alumni to evaluate the continued effectiveness and impact of HRAP's programming on their current work. Alumni were asked to provide both quantitative and qualitative assessments, focused on understanding alumni demographics, community engagement and partnerships, skill development, fundraising, organizational impact and general program recommendations.

SURVEY METHOD

HRAP emailed the 243 HRAP alumni with a working email address. They were asked to complete an online google-form survey in June 2026. Alumni were asked for their name, HRAP year, country of residence, as well as their current organization(s) and title(s). After providing this information, advocates were then asked to answer a total of 32 survey questions. The survey was separated into four sections: Background Information, Skills and Networking, Organizational Impact, Fundraising and Program Reach , and Program Recommendations.



2014 Advocate Essy Adhiambo



2026 Advocates Christopher Rutledge, Ronald Rohrohmana, and Maiya Shang

Jeffery Wambaya, HRAP 2016, Kenya - "Since I left HRAP, I have become a leader and a champion--a shining star that everyone looks up to. 10 years down the road, everyone still admires my growth."

SURVEY RESULTS

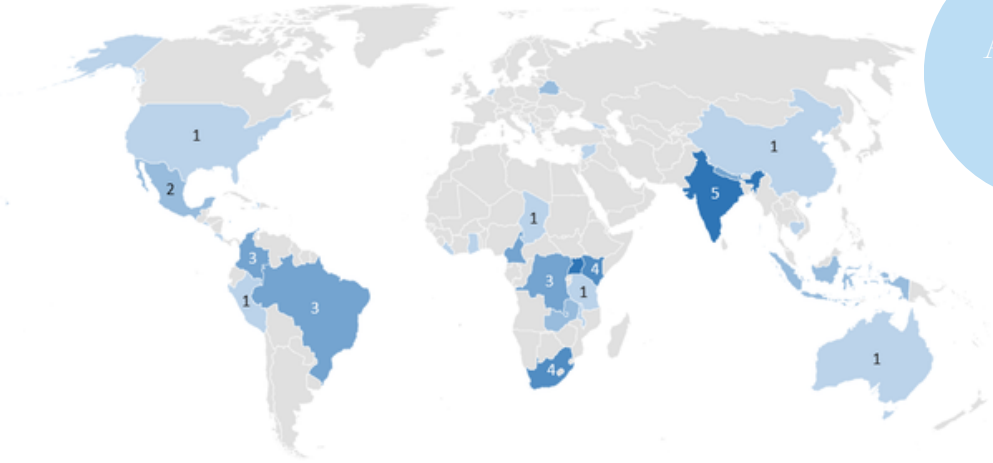


2025 Advocates Gustavo Coutinho and Erick Luwongo

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHICS

63 ALUMNI RESPONSES

Alumni by the Numbers: Who Responded



AFRICA: 28

NORTH AMERICA: 7

SOUTH AMERICA & THE CARIBBEAN: 9

EUROPE: 6

ASIA (INCLUDING MIDDLE EAST): 13

Albania 1	Cameroon 3	El Salvador 1	Indonesia 2	Nepal 3	Uganda 5
Australia 1	Chad 1	Georgia 1	Kenya 4	Peru 1	USA 1
Brazil 3	China 1	Ghana 1	Malawi 1	Liberia 1	Zambia 2
Barbados 1	Colombia 3	Guatemala 2	Mauritania 1	South Africa 5	Zimbabwe 1
Belarus 2	Costa Rica 1	Haiti 1	Mexico 2	Syria 1	
Cambodia 1	DRC 3	India 5	Montenegro 1	Tanzania 1	

97%

of alumni still directly work in human rights

89%

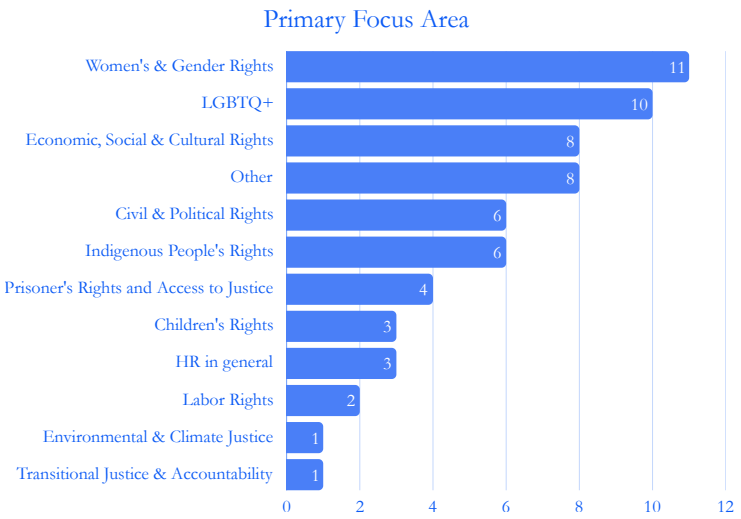
support communities in the Global Majority

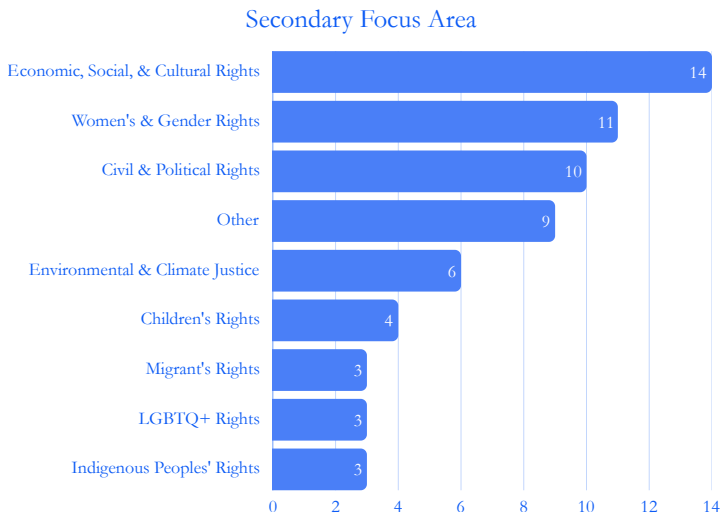
52%

in leadership positions, 13 of which are Executive Directors

HRAP Year	Advocates
1993	1
1995	1
1996	1
1998	1
1999	2
2002	2
2004	4
2005	4
2007	1
2009	1
2010	3
2011	2
2012	2
2013	4
2014	3
2015	2
2016	5
2019	1
2022	5
2023	2
2024	4
2025	7
2026	5

SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHICS



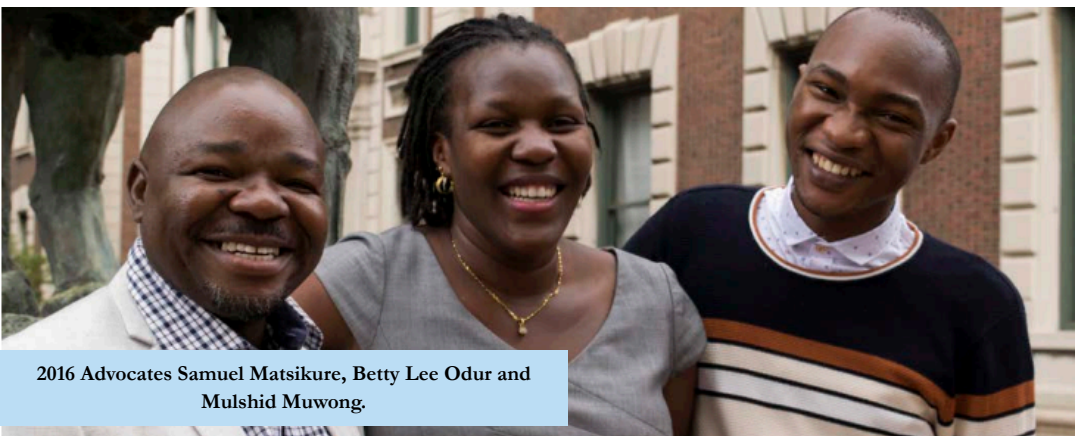


What are the advocates focused on?

The advocates who responded to the survey are primarily focused on Women and Gender Rights followed by LGBTQ+ issues. Other areas of focus included labor rights, protections and advocacy for prisoners, reproductive rights, as well as Indigenous disability rights and visibility. Others felt it important to point out that their work intersects within multiple focus areas or targets uplifting human rights work in general. Many respondents noted that human rights work is not a single job category but rather a fundamental values framework. They described expansion into several distinct but interconnected fields, each reflecting necessary evolution of human rights principles into new institutional and professional contexts.

Jamuna Tamang, HRAP 2024, Nepal - "The knowledge and skills I gained through HRAP have helped me strengthen my leadership, advocacy, and engagement with national and international stakeholders to promote disability inclusion and human rights."

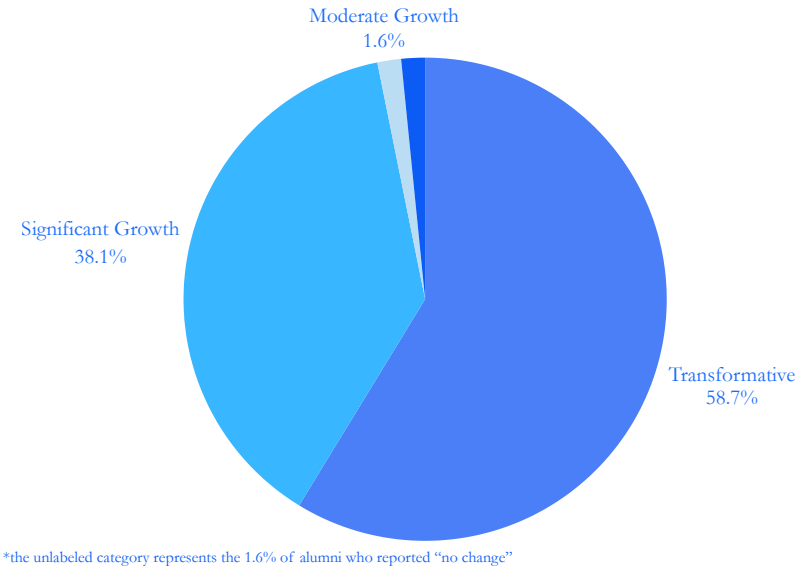
Luis Felipe Polo, HRAP 1993, Peru - "Since completing the Human Rights Advocates Program (HRAP), my career has evolved significantly across the fields of international organizations, higher education, and artificial intelligence. I have held senior leadership positions in academia, including serving as a university rector, and have continued teaching and conducting research while consulting for international organizations and public institutions. More recently, I have been working at Meta, where I lead multilingual AI initiatives focused on large language model (LLM) quality, governance, and operational excellence. Throughout these transitions, my core commitment has remained the same: advancing human rights, ethical leadership, and institutional development. My experience has expanded from traditional human rights work into the emerging field of responsible artificial intelligence, where I seek to promote human-centered approaches to technology, governance, and public policy."



2016 Advocates Samuel Matsikure, Betty Lee Odur and Mulshid Muwong.

SECTION 2:
SKILLS & NETWORKING

How did HRAP impact your overall capacity as an advocate?



*the unlabeled category represents the 1.6% of alumni who reported "no change"

97% of HRAP alumni report that HRAP had considerable effect on their overall capacity as an advocate with a 59% majority of alumni describing HRAP's influence as "transformative." Alumni report success in outcome-oriented advocacy approaches directly contributing to successful legislative and institutional reforms, organizational growth, diversified global networks, coalition building, as well as significant increases in professional development. Not only have advocates utilized skills learned throughout the HRAP program to successfully scale program impact from grassroots, locally situated activism to national and international advocacy pathways – completion of the HRAP program has also equipped advocates with the confidence and skills necessary to influence high-level conversations, secure senior-level positions and transition into leadership roles.

Jeffery Wambaya, HRAP 2016, Kenya – "HRAP built my confidence and helped me explore more opportunities. The studies were a form of career development for me. Today at 48, I am a full-time student in Kenya [in] global health and research. I am publishing research work through the networks I built while at HRAP and my HRAP mentor, Prof. Theodorus Sandfort, remains my inspiration."

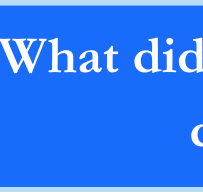
Samuel Matsikure, HRAP 2016, Zimbabwe - "Beyond my personal growth, HRAP amplified my ability to mentor and uplift other advocates. I have encouraged many peers to join the program because I have witnessed firsthand how its transformative impact extends beyond individuals to entire communities. The human rights framework we learned continues to shape how we co-create solutions with communities, building trust, collaboration, and shared ownership of social, political, and economic change. Today, communities see us not only as advocates but as partners and co-architects of change, and that is one of the most powerful legacies of the HRAP experience."

Cecilia Ramirez, HRAP 2019, Mexico – "The program gives me tools and confidence for public speaking specially in English language. I also got tools related to grant writing and donor cultivation which I'm applying in my current position. As an advocate, HRAP was a break for me and an amazing experience living in a great city. I also got confidence and increased my self-esteem. I will always be grateful for this stage in my life."

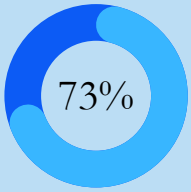
Andrea Tock, HRAP 2024, Guatemala – "HRAP significantly strengthened my networking skills which is honestly where I grew the most. Beyond the connections I built with fellow advocates (many of whom I'm still in regular contact with, sharing experiences and opportunities for our movements), the program taught me something deeper: the importance of talking about your work. I learned how to present my work confidently, highlight it, and take pride in it. That shift in mindset has been transformative both for me personally and for my organization. Since then, we've both opened doors to new opportunities that I can directly trace back to the relationships and communication skills I developed through HRAP."

SECTION 2:
SKILLS & NETWORKING

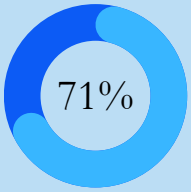
What did HRAP help you develop?



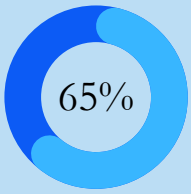
Networking and Coalition Building



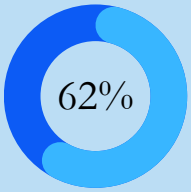
Public Speaking and Presentation



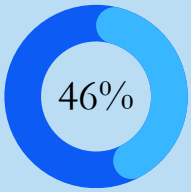
Policy Analysis and Advocacy Strategy



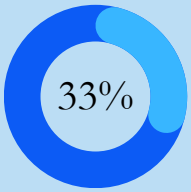
Strategic Planning and Organization



Grant Writing and Donor Cultivation



Documentation and Fact-Finding



Digital Advocacy and Social Media

David Meija, HRAP 2024, Mexico - "HRAP gave me a platform to speak and be recognized as a human rights defender."

Taima Al Jayoush, HRAP 1999, Syria - "Actually all are equal in terms of impact, but I would say networking. Building networks was the base, because that gave me the chance to build up my project, provide pro bono services to battered women at the family court/Sharia court, criminal and civil courts in Syria. Through the project I defended the right of women to divorce, custody, maintenance--most importantly saving women from possible honor crimes. Also, the networks helped me to participate in forming human rights organization in 2001. I was elected as board member. I was the first female Syrian who got that position in 2001."

Connex Khomba, HRAP 2025, Malawi - "HRAP sharpened my public speaking and presentation skills in a real way, not only by just how to speak, but also how I share lived realities and craft messages that land. Through my time, I learnt how to structure arguments for different audiences and deliver them with clarity and purpose. I took that directly into my work. A strong example is the statement I delivered at the United Nations during CSW70 in 2026 at the Outright side event *We Are Still Here: LGBTI Persons and Human Rights*. I called on Member States not to erase Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) language from resolutions which a critical issue at this moment when language and trans rights are under serious attack."

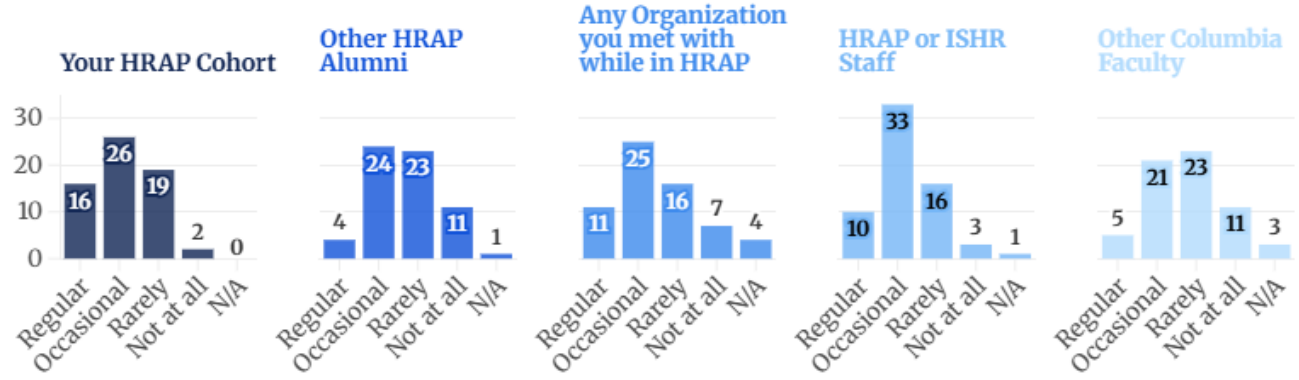
Jamuna Tamang, HRAP 2024, Nepal - "The skill area that has had the greatest impact on my work is Grant Writing and Donor Cultivation, complemented by Policy Analysis and Advocacy Strategy. Through HRAP, I gained a better understanding of how to develop strong funding proposals, build relationships with donors, and connect advocacy priorities with sustainable organizational development. These skills have been particularly valuable in my current role at NID SEWA Nepal, where I contribute to developing grant proposals, engaging with national and international partners, and mobilizing resources to advance the rights of Indigenous women and persons with disabilities. For example, I have contributed to preparing funding proposals and concept notes for international donors and foundations, while also supporting advocacy initiatives that promote disability inclusion and the meaningful participation of Indigenous women in policy processes. HRAP strengthened my ability to communicate human rights issues strategically, making my advocacy and resource mobilization efforts more effective."



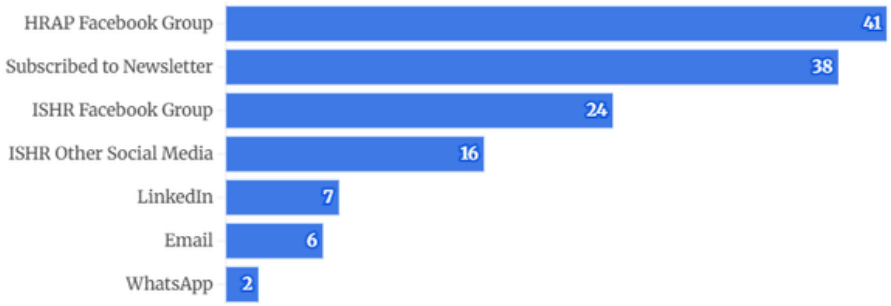
2026 Advocates Ronald Rohrohmana, Maiya Shang and Tatsiana Ziniakova

SECTION 2:
SKILLS & NETWORKING

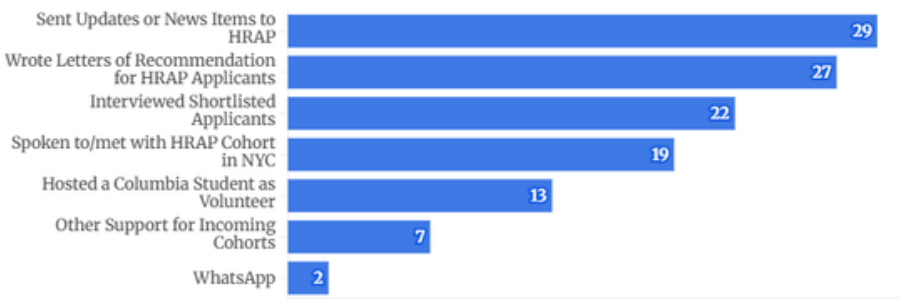
How would you rate your current level of engagement with each area?



Engagement with ISHR



Engagement as HRAP Alumni



Ro-Ann Mohammed, HRAP 2022, Barbados -"I distribute the call for applications to the program every year to all of my advocacy network and support people with their applications when they need guidance or would like to know more about the program."

Larissa Arroyo Navarrete, HRAP 2022, Costa Rica - "The connections developed through HRAP have expanded my professional network beyond Costa Rica. The opportunity to exchange experiences with advocates from different regions has enriched my perspective and continues to inform my work."

Jennifer Flynn Walker, HRAP 2002, USA - "My favorite way to engage is when I am invited to speak at SIPA classes or to HRAP students."

J.S. Datuama Cammue, HRAP 2005, Republic of Liberia - "The skill(s) HRAP gives helped improve my advocacy skill beyond national boundary. Since I returned, we joined others advocates to expand the boundary of advocacy beyond our country and eventually the regionally dimension ECOWAS, as well as beyond the region--all thanks to our Columbia experience."

Alumni were asked about their level of engagement with HRAP networks since participating in the program. Alumni are most connected to their individual cohorts, with 67% stating they have regular or occasional contact with cohort, showing that the direct connections made each year are fundamental and lasting. Alumni stay most informed thanks to the ISHR newsletter and the HRAP Facebook group, with 65% saying they check these most regularly.

Several alumni described their engagement with the HRAP program as deep-rooted with advocates often interviewing applicants, hosting student volunteers, and staying in touch with mentors and staff long after their participation in HRAP ends. While some advocates note challenges to keeping in touch, such as workload, HRAP alumni actively work to identify, recommend, and support the next generation of participants.

SECTION 2: SKILLS & NETWORKING

84% Personal Growth

Speaking Engagements or Conference Invitations 41%

40% Formal Partnership or Collaboration

Funding or Grant Support 33%

32% Expanded Communitines Served

Intersectionality of Issues 32%

29% Technical Assistance or Knowledge

Increased Media Coverage or Support 27%

22% Ongoing Mentorship Relationship

Policy Briefings or Government Meetings 21%

19% Staff or Volunteer Recruitment

Alumni were asked which outcomes occurred as a result of the connections made through HRAP. The highest number of responses were in the "personal growth" category, with many alumni also reporting results in securing formal partnerships and collaboration as well as speaking engagements and conference invitations.

Samuel Matsikure, HRAP 2016, Zimbabwe - "The skills I gained have significantly expanded my capacity to engage strategically with diverse stakeholders. I am now able to identify and scope new funding opportunities, cultivate relationships with potential funders, and confidently pitch our work in ways that resonate with their priorities. I also strengthened my ability to amplify our cause through effective communication, documentation, and evidence-based advocacy. This includes using human rights reports and other credible data sources to inform our strategies, influence decision-makers, and demonstrate the real-world impact of our work."

Advocate, HRAP 2013 - "The professional network established through HRAP continued to provide value well beyond the programme itself. Relationships developed with international experts, academic institutions, and human rights organisations contributed to ongoing exchanges of knowledge and expertise and expanded my understanding of comparative approaches to justice reform, human rights advocacy and institutional change. The programme also strengthened my ability to engage with international organisations, donors and policymakers skills that later proved valuable while managing programmes with UN agencies, international NGOs, bilateral donors and intergovernmental organisations."

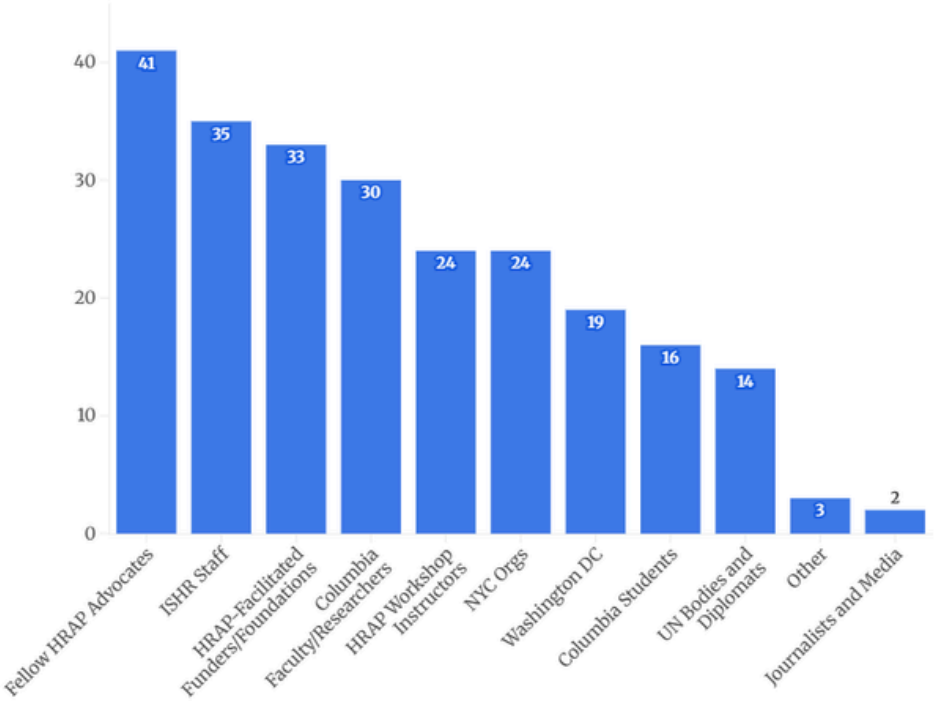
Siarhei Antusevich, HRAP 2010, Belarus - "I've actually changed my outlook on life in many ways thanks to the programme. And, of course, this has had an impact on my life as a whole and on my understanding of myself."

Tatsiana Ziniakova, HRAP 2026, Belarus - "HRAP experience strengthened all aspects of work, particularly widening the international network of partners, allowing to somewhat leave the local bubble and look at the evolving human rights landscape in a more holistic, truly global manner."



2026 Advocate Nyawira Wahito

SECTION 2:
SKILLS & NETWORKING



Alumni were asked to select the most valuable connections from participation in HRAP. The top three categories were "Fellow HRAP Advocates," "ISHR Staff," and "HRAP-facilitated funders and foundations." While some alumni pointed to areas for development - such as deepening engagement and structured programming with alumni - alumni overwhelmingly describe relationships from HRAP as durable, personally meaningful, and directly instrumental to their professional growth and advocacy impact.

Aminatu Gambo, HRAP 2022, Cameroon - "Simply having access to this network has been a meaningful and lasting benefit."

Absolom Shalakha, HRAP 2013, Kenya - "A specific moment where a network connection from HRAP made a meaningful difference to my work was when a fundraising trainer I met through the program supported our organization in identifying potential donors. This trainer worked with us directly, applying donor mapping and other strategic techniques we had practiced during HRAP workshops. Together, we analyzed our existing contacts, mapped prospects by their funding priorities and geographic interests, and developed targeted outreach approaches. As a direct result of that HRAP-facilitated connection and the trainer's guidance, we successfully secured funding from GIZ. That moment was transformative—not only because of the financial support, but because it showed me how a single HRAP relationship could translate into tangible, on-the-ground resources for our advocacy work. Without that connection, we would likely have continued sending blind proposals into the void; with it, we gained both a funding win and a replicable strategy for future donor cultivation."

Salima Namusobya, HRAP 2011, Uganda - "HRAP helped me consolidate relationships with Wellspring and the Fund for Global Human rights. I knew the organizations before but the contact people were glad to interact with me as part of the HRAP cohort and they subsequently became the initial donors for the organizations I founded (ISER)."

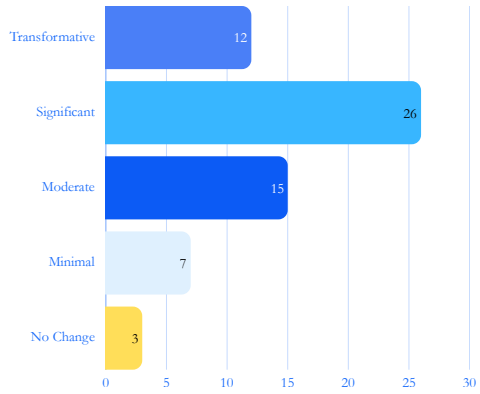
Betty Lee Odur, HRAP 2016, Uganda- "A meaningful connection I made through HRAP was with Salima Namusobya, the Executive Director of the Initiative for Social and Economic Rights (ISER). This connection had a direct and positive impact on my work. Following the program, Salima referred a client to the Uganda Network on Law, Ethics and HIV/AIDS (UGANET), where I worked. The Executive Director of UGANET assigned me to provide legal support to the client. Knowing that the referral came from a fellow HRAP alumna motivated me to handle the case with dedication and professionalism. Throughout the process, I worked collaboratively with Salima, keeping her and my Executive Director informed through regular updates on the progress of the case. As a result of our collaboration and sustained legal support, the client successfully secured her rightful share of her late husband's inheritance. This experience demonstrated the value of the professional network built through HRAP. It strengthened collaboration between our organizations, improved access to justice for the client, and reinforced the importance of maintaining strong relationships with fellow human rights advocates."

Aehshatou Manu, HRAP 2016, Cameroon - "I have kept collaboration with organizations such as MADRE and others and continue to collaborate with them in different spaces. The resulting visibility at the UN level underscores the tangible outcomes of HRAP networking, showing how strategic connections can strengthen advocacy capacity and deliver measurable impact."

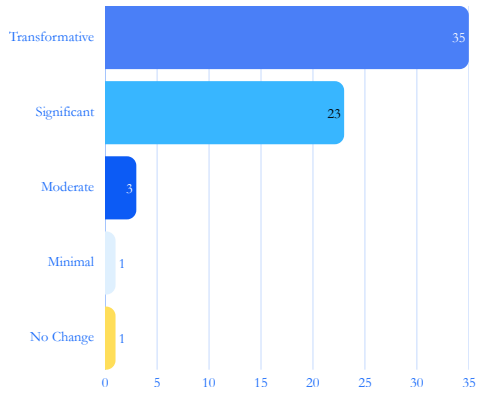
SECTION 3:
PROGRAM REACH & IMPACT

Alumni were asked to rate the level of influence HRAP had on the following institutional dimensions:

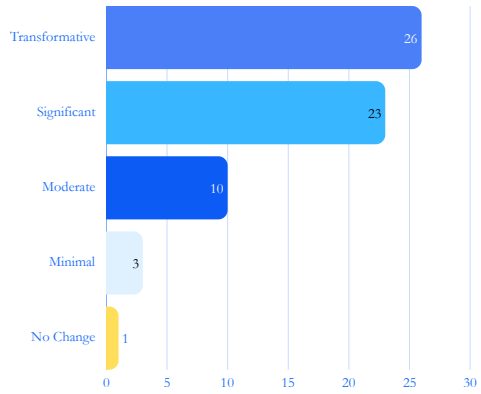
Organizational Strategy and Planning



Personal Growth

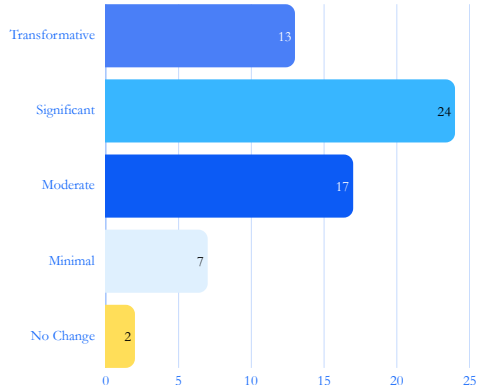


Advocacy Effectiveness

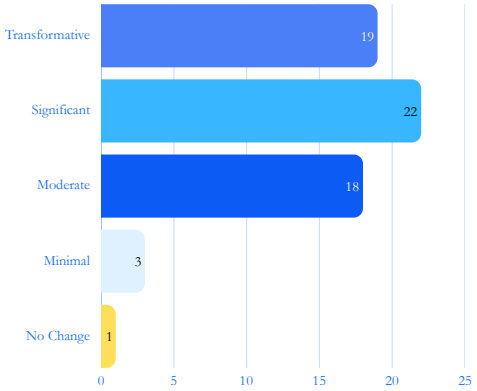


Larissa Arroyo Navarrete, HRAP 2022, Costa Rica - "While organizational change is always the result of collective effort, HRAP provided tools, networks, and perspectives that have directly influenced how I approach advocacy and institutional transformation."

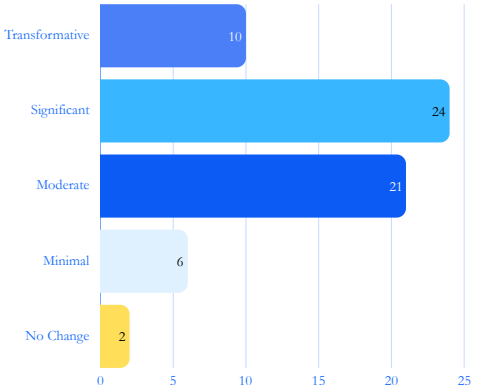
Program Quality and Reach



Morale and Organizational Confidence

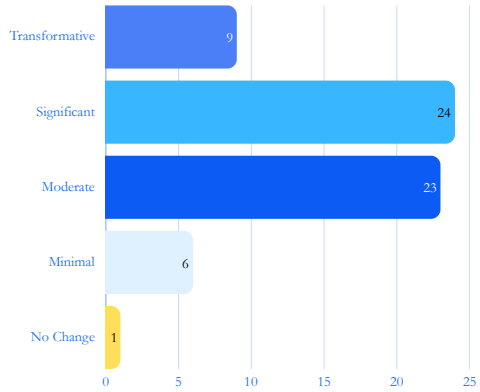


Staff Capacity and Team Skills

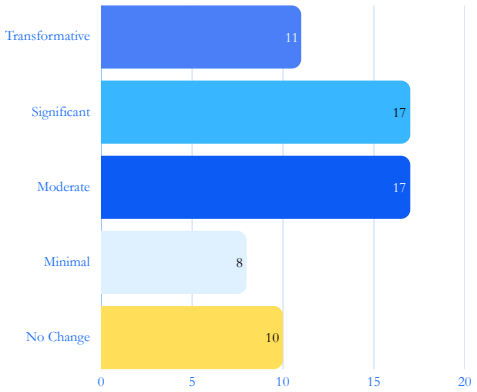


Absolom Shalakha, HRAP 2013, Kenya - "HRAP didn't just improve my existing work, it gave me the tools, relationships, and legitimacy to build something entirely new. Change for Planet Foundation (C4P) exists because HRAP taught me how to turn advocacy aspiration into institutional reality."

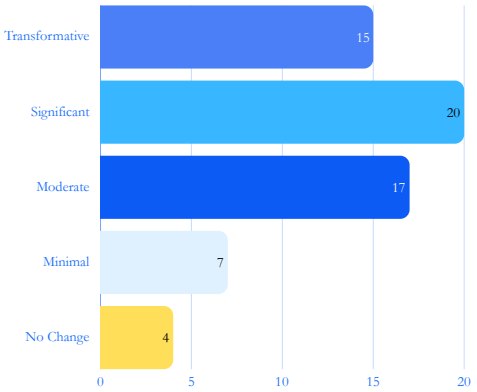
External Communications and Media Visibility



Fundraising and Financial Sustainability



Partnerships and Coalition Membership



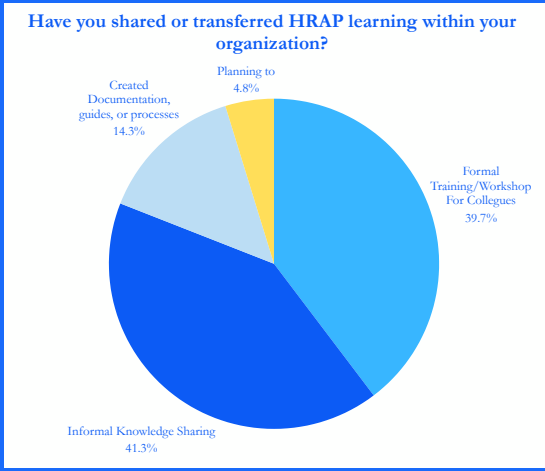
SECTION 3:
PROGRAM REACH & IMPACT

Since HRAP participation, a majority of advocates report raising their individual profile, increasing funding for organizations, and becoming recognized human rights resource for others. Alumni typically contextualized these achievements alongside a broader shift from reactive, localized activism toward more strategic, evidence-based, and institutionalized advocacy. While professional transitions and the need to create more formalized information-sharing channels between advocates remain a challenge for some, alumni consistently credited HRAP with strengthening their strategic capacity, expanding their networks and funding access, and elevating their organizations' credibility and reach.

Luis Felipe Polo, HRAP 1993, Peru - "The most significant organizational change I can attribute to my HRAP experience has been the integration of human rights principles into institutional leadership and organizational strategy. HRAP reinforced my conviction that respect for human dignity, inclusion, accountability, and ethical decision-making should not be limited to advocacy organizations but should become guiding principles for any institution."

Sandeep Kumar Pattnaik, HRAP 2007, India - "The most significant transformation attributable to my HRAP experience is the organizational shift from grassroots mobilization to multi-level policy engagement within my work ecosystem. This strategic evolution has fundamentally altered how our organizations approach advocacy, accountability, and community representation. Before HRAP: Our advocacy model was primarily reactive and localized. We responded to immediate threats faced by tribal communities, organized protests, and conducted ground-level documentation. While effective for raising awareness, our work rarely penetrated institutional decision-making channels. After HRAP, structural changes emerged, for example, strategic networking infrastructure. Through HRAP connections with organizations like ESCR-Net and academic institutions like NYU's Human Rights Center, we established sustained partnerships that lend credibility and reach. These relationships now form a core part of our advocacy architecture, enabling us to document issues with academic rigor and present findings to international bodies."

Elvis Hoxhaj, HRAP 2015, Albania - "Although I left the organization only a few months after returning from HRAP, I was still able to share some of the knowledge and experience I had gained. Through informal mentorship, I supported several colleagues in developing their grant writing and public speaking skills, drawing on the approaches and best practices I learned during the program. I also introduced them to organizations and contacts I had met during my time in New York, helping to expand their professional networks and create opportunities for future collaboration. While my time to implement broader organizational changes was limited, I believe these contributions had a meaningful and lasting impact on my colleagues' professional development."

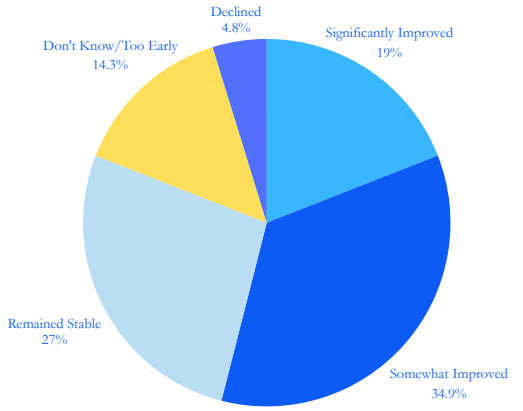


Milestones since HRAP Participation:

Raised Individual Profile	38
Raised Funding for Organization	32
Became a Human Rights Resource Person/Organization for Others	33
Expanded human rights issues covered	27
Informal Knowledge Sharing	26
Expanded Communities Served	26
Formal Training/Workshop for Collegues	25
Grew Staff or Volunteer Team	22
Formed or Joined a Coalition	21
Achieved a Policy or Legal Victory	19
Engaged with UN Mechanisms	19
Studied for an Academic Degree	17
Created a New Organization	13

SECTION 3:
PROGRAM REACH & IMPACT

How has your organization's funding situation changed since completing HRAP?

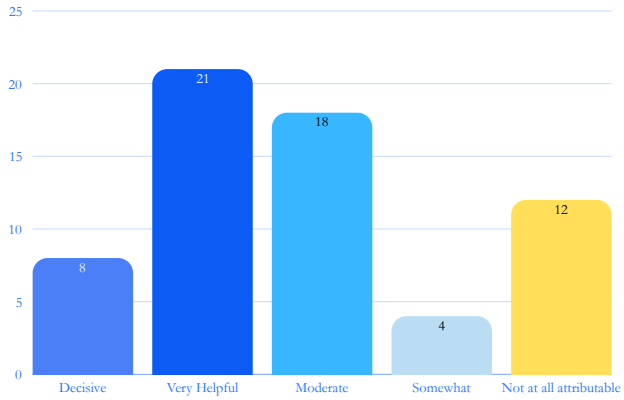




Andrea Tock, HRAP 2024, Guatemala - "The impact has been cumulative: each connection opens a new door."

75% of alumni felt HRAP has meaningfully impacted their organizations' funding capacity with a majority reporting the program's involvement was very helpful. Advocate's saw improvements and achievements in proposal writing, donor engagement, and strategic fundraising skills. A smaller group of alumni report a lack of influence on funding opportunities, but recognize systemic instabilities and external factors as playing a larger, determining role. Overall, advocates see HRAP's contribution to their fundraising skills and confidence as decisive, regardless of current funding realities.

HRAP's Involvement in Organization's Funding Was:



Aehshatou Manu, HRAP 2016, Cameroon - "I met different stakeholders during my time in the programme and that gave me an opportunity to reach out to them. For example through UN Women we were able to implement a three-year project on GBV for Indigenous women and girls that greatly improved their wellbeing and reduced early force marriages within the Indigenous communities. This has contributed to reducing GBV within the communities and also the mindset changes of community representatives including inclusion of women in community decision spaces."

Christopher Rutledge, HRAP 2026, South Africa - "During the fellowship we started to change what we were saying to funders and how we presented the organisation...this has resulted in positive feedback from funders and opportunities to work towards future funding opportunities."

Advocate, HRAP 2023 - "The situation shifted drastically since my departure, and I am no longer closely linked to the organization. However, the confidence I gained in engaging donors and stakeholders during my time at HRAP was significant in finding and reaching out to potential new funder and program partners."

Erick Luwongo, HRAP 2025, Tanzania - "I selected 3 [moderate] because HRAP has contributed positively to my professional development and networking opportunities, but it has not been the sole or decisive factor in securing funding for my organization. The skills I gained through HRAP particularly in networking, advocacy strategy, public speaking, and organizational development have strengthened my ability to engage with partners, communicate our work effectively, and identify potential funding opportunities. The program also expanded my professional network, creating connections that may support future collaborations and resource mobilization efforts. However, funding outcomes depend on many factors beyond individual skills and networks, including organizational capacity, donor priorities, project design, competition for limited resources, and long-term relationship building. While HRAP has enhanced HakiMadini's visibility and strengthened our readiness to engage with potential supporters, the organization still needs to do more to translate these opportunities into sustainable funding."

Taima Al Jayoush, HRAP 1999, Syria - "It was helpful in providing the vision and the strategy of my project to stockholders. Explaining each aspect with care and transparency."

SECTION 3:
PROGRAM REACH & IMPACT



1999 Advocate Delphine Djiraïbé

Throughout the section surveying HRAP's effect on organizational impact, fundraising and program reach, advocates consistently distinguished between HRAP's significant impact on fundraising skills and the harsh funding landscape beyond any one program's control. While fundraising gains were not always attributable to HRAP connections, alumni largely agree the program was instrumental in strengthening funding capacity, both directly and indirectly.

HRAP ADVOCATES CONSISTENTLY GAINED:

- Lasting Fundraising Skills
- Professional Credibility
- Expanded Advocay Areas

Renuka KR, HRAP 2004, India - "The programme enhanced my ability to frame our work within a human rights and policy advocacy perspective, which has significantly improved the quality of our funding proposals and donor engagement. The knowledge gained through HRAP helped us design programmes with clearer theories of change, stronger advocacy components, measurable outcomes, and an intersectional approach. As a result, we were better positioned to demonstrate how our work contributes to long-term systemic change rather than only delivering community-level activities. This has been particularly valuable in proposals focused on the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of adolescent girls, youth leadership, and gender equality."

Evalyn Achan, HRAP 2009, Uganda - "When attending HRAP program, a donor located me during one of the different meetings I attended and at the time, they were looking for organisations to work with in Northern Uganda. That was how CHAFORD [Charity for Rural Development] was able to secure three years of funding."

Delphine Djiraïbén, HRAP 1999, Chad - "[The] skills I acquired from HRAP helped me better tailor projects and better meet funder's expectations."

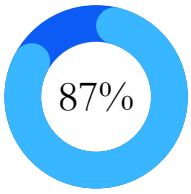
J.S. Datuama Cammue, HRAP 2005, Republic of Liberia- "The understanding that funders give to people and not organisations helped me raise my profile with donors in order to increase funding to my organisation."

Sandeep Kumar Pattnaik, HRAP 2007, India - "The HRAP alumni affiliation carried significant weight when approaching potential funding partners and institutional donors. Many foundation representatives and grant-making organizations view HRAP participation as a mark of rigorous training and accountability, which streamlined our proposal review process. This credibility was particularly important for grassroots organizations like People's Welfare Women's Organisation, where external validation often serves as a prerequisite for accessing larger funding pools."

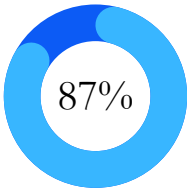
Jeffery Wambaya, HRAP 2016, Kenya - "The networks we created. Then there is power in HRAP: when donors know you have been through the program, they have faith in you. There is a level of accountability and transparency that you learn and the biggest thing is you leave HRAP disciplined."

SECTION 4: PROGRAM EVALUATION

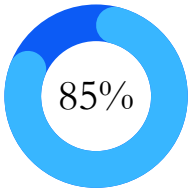
Alumni were asked to assess how valuable each component of the HRAP program was to their professional development. The top 5 categories where advocates selected either "exceptional" or "very" valuable were:



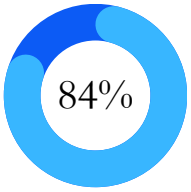
Columbia University Courses



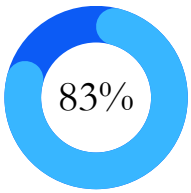
NYC Workshops and Group Sessions



NYC Site Visits and Networking



HRAP Staff Guidance and Support



Columbia Faculty Guidance and Support

ALUMNI WISHLIST

Aminatu Gambo, HRAP 2022, Cameroon - "HRAP could strengthen its long-term impact by creating more structured opportunities for participants to stay connected, such as cohort reunions, peer learning sessions, and mentorship opportunities. These would help sustain relationships, encourage collaboration, and reinforce the program's long-term value."

Adija Adamu, HRAP 2025, Cameroon - "Online town halls for alumni and those who we interacted during our time in HRAP to reconnect and share experiences and updates after HRAP."

Advocate, HRAP 2023 - "The Program provides so many wonderfully engaging and helpful opportunities, but some of the opportunities are not adaptable to contexts outside of the US. As advocates primarily come from Global South contexts, it may not always be easy or possible to apply some of what we learn in our own contexts. Perhaps supporting advocates to create and continue South-South collaborative working groups, or giving access to platforms/courses/resources which are applicable to the Global South would strengthen the program."

Cecilia Ramirez, HRAP 2019, Mexico - "Perhaps it could be positive to increase some workshops related to self-care while our work impacts in our feelings and overall emotional state. I also loved the Theatre of the Oppressed workshop. It could be positive to have more than one session about it."

While alumni rated nearly every other program component highly, with under 15% of responses landing in the "slightly" or "not at all valuable" categories, the alumni network and events stood out as the one area advocates most wanted to see strengthened. Respondents overwhelmingly called for the alumni network to be more structured and sustained, with common suggestions including formal mentorship pairings and structured reunions. Beyond the network itself, alumni pointed to several other areas for growth, with many looking for structured support translating learning into real-world applications and programs. Others called for the program to better account for the realities of Global Majority contexts, as well as expanding advocate self-care and mental health support while in the program. Overwhelmingly, however, alumni were clear that these recommendations could only strengthen the already indispensable investment HRAP provides for the next generation of human rights advocates.

Larissa Arroyo Navarrete, HRAP 2022, Costa Rica - "Opportunities for collaborative projects, joint advocacy efforts, or thematic working groups would help transform the network into an ongoing resource for collective problem-solving. Many organizations face similar structural challenges, and the ability to learn directly from peers who have navigated those challenges successfully would be one of the most valuable forms of support that the HRAP network could provide."

SECTION 4: PROGRAM EVALUATION

WHERE DO ADVOCATES NEED SUPPORT?



2014 Advocate Carol Dyantyi

Aehshatou Manu, HRAP 2016, Cameroon - "One of the ongoing challenges our organization faces is the lack of specialized technical expertise to strengthen digital security and advocacy in repressive environments. For example, while we have strong grassroots networks documenting human rights abuses, we often struggle to protect sensitive data and communications. This is an area where the Human Rights Advocates Program network could provide critical support by connecting us with alumni who have experience in digital rights, cybersecurity, or secure documentation practices."

Carolina Quinteros, HRAP 2004, El Salvador - "Many organizations were affected by the shift in the U.S. funding cooperation landscape. It would be highly valuable to understand how cooperation works in this environment and how we can adapt to these new realities without losing the work we do."

Geoffrey Mayamba, HRAP 2013, Zambia - HRAP could "share links of new and emerging funders who work in the areas former HRAP operate in."

Advocate, HRAP 2013 - "Like many organisations working in the human rights and democratic governance sector, one ongoing challenge is maintaining meaningful international cooperation and exchange in an increasingly complex and rapidly changing operating environment. The HRAP network could provide valuable support by facilitating peer learning, sharing comparative experiences from different regions, connecting practitioners facing similar challenges, and creating opportunities for joint reflection on emerging issues affecting civic space, participation, accountability and human rights protection. Additionally, the network could serve as a platform for knowledge exchange on innovative approaches to advocacy, community engagement, coalition-building, programme evaluation and resource mobilisation. The diversity of HRAP alumni remains one of its greatest strengths and an important source of collective expertise."

Alumni consistently identify funding instability as the most pressing challenge facing their organizations, citing a shrinking donor landscape, the impact of recent U.S. funding cuts, and mounting pressure on programs serving LGBTQ+, indigenous, and other marginalized communities. Beyond funding, respondents point to a need for deeper technical expertise, particularly around digital security, legal and policy analysis, and safety protocols for frontline activists operating in increasingly restrictive environments. Advocates largely see HRAP's existing network as well positioned to help address these institutional challenges, with many proposing that the program formalize donor connections, mentorship, and peer exchange so alumni can draw on each other's expertise more consistently.

At the same time, several alumni flagged emerging issues the program has not yet caught up to, including the human rights implications of digital advances, and the need for more adaptive strategies to sustain advocacy amid a rising tide of authoritarianism and shrinking civic space. Overwhelmingly, however, alumni were clear that these evolving needs only reinforce HRAP's unique value, positioning the program as indispensable for human rights advocates everywhere.

SECTION 4:
PROGRAM EVALUATION

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND HRAP?

97%

have already recommended the HRAP program to others



2011 HRAP Cohort

84%

said they "absolutely would recommend" HRAP to collegues

Samuel Matsikure, HRAP 2016, Zimbabwe - "I have seen advocates who came before me thrive, and those who participated alongside me are now doing remarkable work across the globe. The opportunity for an individual to attend HRAP creates benefits that extend far beyond the participant — the knowledge, networks, and skills gained ripple outward to strengthen communities, movements, and collective human rights leadership. HRAP equips advocates to uplift others, build sustainable initiatives, and contribute to a broader ecosystem of global human rights impact, ensuring that the program's value multiplies well beyond the individual experience."

Ronald Rohrohmana, HRAP 2026, Indondesia - "HRAP arrived at the point where I was moving from advocacy work carried out within an established institution's mandate to building something of my own, and the programme shaped how that transition happened. The rigour of the coursework, tested most directly through repeated revision of a paper that started as a fisheries specific critique and became a broader argument about business and human rights, gave me a stronger analytical foundation to build a new organisation on rather than simply carrying old habits into a new setting. The network proved just as consequential as the coursework. Introductions from faculty opened conversations across mining, agriculture, and energy that have since defined the direction of my work, funding strategy sessions reframed where I look for support, and the cohort itself has become a working reference point rather than a list of contacts from a programme long since finished. What HRAP has meant, in practical terms, is the difference between leaving an institution with a set of transferable skills and leaving with a functioning network and a sharper sense of what to build next."

Absolom Shalakha, HRAP 2013, Kenya - "I would enthusiastically recommend HRAP to any colleague working in the human rights sector, whether they are at a large international NGO or just starting a grassroots initiative. The program gave me not just theoretical frameworks but practical, actionable skills in strategic planning, networking, and donor cultivation that directly led to tangible outcomes."

Aehshatou Manu, HRAP 2016, Cameroon - "HRAP gave me something I didn't know I was missing: a sense of community and belonging within the broader human rights movement. Finding a space filled with people who share your values and believe in the same vision of justice was deeply meaningful and that sense of belonging carried over into my work. It gave me the confidence to speak about what I do, opened doors to spaces like CSW and the NYU Legal Empowerment Lab, and connected me to a global network of advocates that has concretely shaped the trajectory of my organization. But above all, HRAP reminded me that we are not doing this alone."

Amisha Adhikari, HRAP 2024, Nepal - "HRAP has been a formative bridge between my advocacy and academic journey, strengthening my confidence, expanding my networks, and shaping the way I approach human rights work."

Nadia Juliana Bazan, HRAP 2011, Colombia - "Among many reasons, it was a wonderful opportunity to pause the work and reflect on how we were doing it. That was so helpful and energizing. Doing it alongside people who shared my concerns, from other continents, was enlightening."

CONCLUSION

As HRAP approaches its 40th anniversary, the results of this survey make clear that the program's impact extends far beyond the time advocates spend in New York. 97% percent of alumni report that HRAP had a transformative or significant effect on their overall capacity as advocates, with equally strong gains in networking and coalition building, personal growth, and advocacy effectiveness. These skills have translated into measurable outcomes across the alumni community with a majority of advocates reporting successes such as launching new programs or initiatives, founding entirely new organizations, and raising funding for their organization through connections facilitated by HRAP.

Beyond individual achievements, alumni consistently describe HRAP as a catalyst for broader institutional change, helping shift their organizations from reactive, localized activism toward more strategic, evidence-based advocacy. The HRAP network itself, from fellow advocates to Columbia faculty and staff to foundations, remains one of the program's most valued and durable assets, with alumni continuing to draw on these relationships years--and even decades after leaving the program.

While alumni identified meaningful opportunities for growth, from a more structured alumni network to greater attention to Global Majority contexts and emerging issues like digital security, these recommendations were offered not as critiques but as investments in a program alumni overwhelmingly consider indispensable. With 97% of respondents saying they have recommended HRAP enthusiastically to colleagues, the survey affirms that four decades in, HRAP continues to equip advocates with the tools, confidence, and community needed to sustain human rights work in an increasingly complex global landscape.



2013 Advocate Absolom Shalakha

APPENDIX

The following respondentsa agreed to have their names published in this report. We thank all the advocates who took the time to respond!

1993

Luis Felipe Polo G. (Peru), President, Innovation and Human Development Institute (INHUDINS), USA

1995

Michelle Gueraldi, Doctor of Law, Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), Brazil

1996

Twesigye Jackson Kaguri, CEO, Nyaka, Uganda

1999

Taima Al Jayoush, Founder and Chief Attorney, Alalyiaa (Family) Law Centre, Syria

Delphine Djiraïbé, Founder and Chief Attorney, Public Interest Law Center, Chad

2002

Jennifer Flynn Walker, Chief of Fightback, Popular Democracy, USA

Leonardo Reales, Executive Director, INNDESCO GROUP, Colombia

2004

Lilian Keene-Mugerwa, Legal and Strategy Adviser, Platform for Labour Action (PLA), Uganda

Renuka KR, Director, Centre for Women's Development and Research, India

Sukumaran Krishnan, Advocate, India

Carolina Quinteros, GMIES, El Salvador

2005

Mawuli Dake, Executive Director, Moremi Initiative for Women's Leadership in Africa, Ghana

J.S. Datuama Cammue, Head of National Programme, Convention on Biodiversity at Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia, Republic of Liberia

Tshiwaka Masoka Hubert, Directeur General, Institut de recherche en droits humains (IRDH), Democratic Republic of the Congo

2007

Sandeep Kumar Pattnaik, Programme Director, Janamangal Mahila Samiti (People's Welfare Women's Organisation), India

2009

Evalyne Achan, Regional Grants and Movement Building Coordinator, Uganda

2010

Siarhei Antusevich, Vice President, Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions, Belarus

Colette Lespinasse, Foyer Maurice Sixto (FMS), Haiti

Bakary Tandia, Co-founder, The Abolition Institute, USA

2011

Nadia Juliana Bazan, Gender Adviser, Act Church of Sweden, Colombia

APPENDIX

Salima Namusobya, VP for Africa, Center for Reproductive Rights, Uganda

2012

Ngungua Sangua, Founder, Action Large des Femmes Avocates, Democratic Republic of the Congo

2013

Musola C. Kaseketi, Founder/Advisor, Vilole Images Productions (VIP), Zambia

Geoffrey Mayamba, Executive Director, Prisoners' Future Foundation (PFF), Zambia

Absolom Shalakha, Executive Director, Change for Planet Foundation (C4P), Kenya

2014

Essy Adhiambo, Founder and Executive Director, Initiative for Equality and Non-Discrimination, Kenya

Carol Dyantyi, Founder, Uzima, South Africa

2015

Sandra Creamer, Board Member, FIMI, Australia

Elvis Hoxhaj, Project Manager, Alliance Against LGBT Discrimination, Albania

2016

Betty Lee Odur, Human Rights Defender, Uganda

Aehshatou Manu, Member, African Indigenous Women Organization (AIWO), Cameroon

Samuel Matsikure (Zimbabwe), Team Lead, Aidsfonds, Netherlands

Chhing Lamu Sherpa, Mountain Spirit, Nepal

Jeffrey Walimbwa Wambaya, Program Manager, Ishtar, Kenya

2019

Cecilia Ramirez, Programs Coordinator, FIMI, Mexico

2021-22

Larissa Arroyo Navarrete, General Coordinator, Grupo de trabajo de AGENDA CEDAW, Costa Rica

Aminatu Gambo, Grants Coordinator, MADRE, Cameroon

Ro-Ann Mohammed, Director, Pride Barbados, Barbados

Alejandro Pinilla, Head of Communications and Press, Inter-American Court of Human Rights, Colombia

Daniel Villatoro, Latin American LGBT Reporting Initiative, Guatemala

2022-23

Antonia Moreira, Executive Director, Transmoras, Brazil

2023-24

Amisha Adhikari (Nepal), International Legal Studies - L.L.M, Georgetown University Law Center, USA

David Mejía (Mexico), Critical Race Studies Fellow, UCLA School of Law, USA

Jamuna Tamang, Advocate, NID SEWA Nepal, Nepal

Andrea Tock, Director of Impact and Learning, Women's Justice Initiative, Guatemala

APPENDIX

2024-25

Adija Adamu, AYNI Fund Grants Coordinator Africa, FIMI, Cameroon

Gustavo Coutinho, Researcher, Flacso, Brazil

Thehoya Dy, Unit Head of Anti-Human Trafficking and Migration (AHMU), Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL), Cambodia

Bojana Jokić, Lawyer, Chairwoman of the Board, LGBT Forum Progress, Montenegro

Connex Khomba, Senior Advocacy and Grants Manager, Ivy Foundation, Malawi

Erick Luwongo, Head of Human Rights and Legal Empowerment Program, HakiMadini, Tanzania

Kutlwano Magashula, Executive Officer for Programmes, The Other Foundation, South Africa

2025-26

Ronald Rohrohmana, Independent Researcher, Indonesia

Christopher Rutledge, Executive Director, MACUA WAMUA Advice Office, South Africa

Nyawira Wahito, Executive Director, Resource Center for Women and Girls, Kenya

Tatsiana Ziniakova, Legal Analyst, Human Constanta, Belarus



Taima Al Jayoush (HRAP 1999) is the Founder and Chief Attorney of the Alalyiaa (Family) Law Centre located in Damascus, Syria.

"Twenty seven years ago, HRAP accepted the application of a young lawyer from Syria who had a deep passion for human rights and an eagerness to learn how international human rights conventions and treaties could be used to defend and advance those rights. That acceptance opened doors to knowledge, skills, ideas, and experiences that I could never have imagined. It also introduced me to mentors, colleagues, and lifelong friends who have profoundly influenced and shaped my professional journey.

Looking back, I believe that if the purpose of HRAP is to educate, empower, and inspire advocates to protect and advance human rights, then the program has accomplished something truly remarkable. Its impact extends far beyond the classroom, actually it lives on through the work of the advocates it has trained and the people whose lives they have touched. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity I was given 27 years ago. I am proud of the work I have been able to do in defense of human rights and women's rights, and I remain deeply honored and privileged to call Columbia University my alma mater.

To HRAP, to Columbia, and to all those who have made this journey possible: thank you for believing in the power of human rights advocacy and for giving so many of us the knowledge, courage, and tools to make a difference."

This survey and report were prepared, designed and conducted by Brooke Blackburn, a graduate student in Sociocultural Anthropology at Columbia University at the request of ISHR. Special thanks and gratitude to Dr. Martin Hill, Ph.D., Associate Director, Research and Evaluation, Heartland Alliance Marjorie Kovler Center, for his assistance designing the survey questions and copy-editing the final report.

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