



Lives Empowered

Celebrating USAID Disability Inclusive Development



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Cover image: Lasha Kuprashvili, Coalition For Independent Living

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This book is dedicated to Senator Tom Harkin for his life's work in protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and to the 1 billion men, women and children with disabilities worldwide who are breaking down barriers every day to improve the quality of life for generations to come.

Introduction

The rights of 1 billion men, women and children with disabilities around the world have finally been recognized as legally binding human rights with the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). These rights include the right to education, to employment, to healthcare—the right to access justice, to participate in political and public life and to be free from exploitation, violence and abuse.

Persons with disabilities, who make up 15 percent of the global population, are the world's largest minority. Disability is not something to be pitied or fixed, but rather it is a part of the human condition to be celebrated. Persons with disabilities are diverse. They are members of indigenous tribes; part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender community; mothers, fathers, and school children; they are Asian, African, American, Middle Eastern and European.

While gains have been made to advance the human rights of persons with disabilities, most notably with the ratification of the CRPD by over 150 member States, there remains an urgent need to ensure that implementation of disability policy is carried out.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has a long history of including persons with disabilities within our programs and activities. For more than 20 years, the Agency has fostered a climate of non-discrimination and equal participation of persons with disabilities. Yet, we recognize that to further increase participation of persons with disabilities in our programs, we must remove a range of barriers, such as physical inaccessibility and negative stereotypes, and we must work more closely with persons with disabilities themselves.

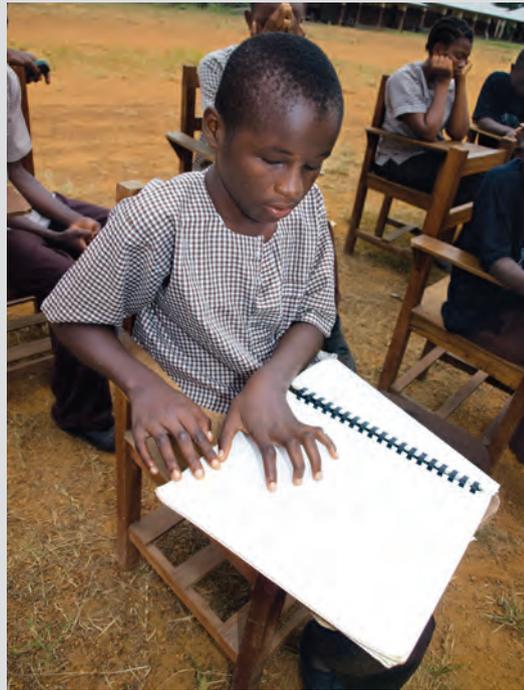
This book tells the story of lives empowered through a collection of photographed individuals who have participated in USAID-supported programs over the past 10 years. The story also illustrates the “domino effect” produced when a child is able to access education from a young age, then transition into the workforce and become a productive member of society. As USAID works to end extreme poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies to realize their potential, we recognize that all members of society must be fully engaged, including persons with disabilities.

We thank the individuals who have allowed their stories to be shared and hope that they inspire others to continue to champion a society fully inclusive of all.

“Disability rights aren't just civil rights to be enforced here at home; they're universal rights to be recognized and promoted around the world.”

— PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA, 2009

▶ A young student in Liberia follows along in class by reading the day's lesson in braille.



Dinah Zeltser-Winant, USAID



USAID believes **quality and inclusive education** is the foundation for a better life and a stronger economy.



USAID/Jamaica

◀ Students of the Caribbean Christian Center for the Deaf school in Montego Bay, Jamaica, discuss why having a job in the future is important to them. The girl to the left would like to save money to purchase a car.

The *Supporting Workforce and Development for Deaf Youth in Jamaica* project, implemented by Junior Achievement, has taught deaf and hard-of-hearing students about work readiness, entrepreneurship, and financial literacy through experiential, hands-on learning.



All children have the ability to learn and succeed.



USAID/Macedonia

▲ Assistive technology enables a young girl in Macedonia to use the school computer.

The *Equal Access for Equal Opportunities* project, implemented by Open the Windows, has enabled students with disabilities throughout Macedonia to participate and excel in mainstream classrooms through the use of assistive technology.



Investing in **early childhood development** sets the stage for future success.

UKRAINE | A Mother's Story



Tatiana Mukshynova

▲ Sasha (right) and his twin brother Mychailo (left) read with their father, Oleg.

"I'm a mother of two twin sons, one of whom, Mychailo, has Down syndrome. In September, Mychailo started to attend an inclusive (preschool) group alongside his brother and other children of the same age. Mychailo is the first child with Down syndrome at our preschool. Due to implementation of the USAID/Ukraine, *Step by Step Inclusive Education Project* we achieved a new stage in our life and I'm sure that my son will learn a great deal from joining in with other children and he'll make the best progress alongside his peers. So I'm really happy that he's included in all activities in the group as other children do. I hope that both of my sons will have a lot of friends and will grow up in the society which respects everybody." —TATIANA MUKSHYNOVA, mother of two young children

- ▶ Children (top) perform a song in sign language at a national music festival in Almaty, Kazakhstan.
- ▶ The winner of the festival was a young boy named, Tazhibaev Erkhat (bottom). The festival attracted 100 artists and over 350 spectators countrywide.



Civil Society Development Association

The *Empowerment Now!* project, implemented by the Civil Society Development Association (ARGO), aims to improve public perception of persons with disabilities in Kazakhstan.



Civil Society Development Association



Inclusive cultural activities change attitudes toward persons with disabilities.



Fundación Saraki

- ▶ Juanqui (top right) and another little boy play and draw together during a culture fair organized by the National Culture Secretariat in Paraguay. The photograph clearly shows that kids are inclusive by nature.

“Kids don’t see the difference; we should all learn from their empathy and sensibility.”

—MARÍA JOSÉ CABEZUDO, mother of Juan Carlos (“Juanqui”)



Dwi Ananta, Helen Keller International

▲ Andhika (right), an 11-year-old boy who is blind, walks to class with his friend in East Java, Indonesia.

“I am very grateful that I can attend school given my family’s condition. We live on my mom’s salary which is hardly enough for our daily meals. I like everything at school: my friends, my teacher, and I really like studying math. One day I want to be a clever ulema (male Islamic scholar) and a successful person.” —ANDHIKA

The *Opportunities for Vulnerable Children* program, implemented by Helen Keller International, has strengthened the inclusive education system in Indonesia, focusing specifically on enhancing inclusion of children with disabilities in the formal education system.



Save the Children

▲ A teacher helps a student during an afterschool vocational education training program.

The *Livelihood Improvement through Fostered Employment (LIFE)* program, implemented by Save the Children, has created inroads for youth with disabilities to participate in vocational training programs in Armenia by training teachers on inclusive education practices.



Providing **teachers** with the knowledge and tools to be able to address diverse learning needs leads to greater inclusion.



World Vision

▲ A mother and son engage in art therapy together.

The *Building Disabled People's Organizations Outreach for Greater Disability Inclusiveness* project, implemented by World Vision in Armenia, has promoted inclusive education for children with disabilities by actively engaging parents and caregivers.



Empowering parents and caregivers is important in advocating for inclusive education and guiding their children in discovering personal independence.



Organization of Rehabilitation and Training Montenegro

▲ A young boy from Montenegro learns to horseback ride for recreation.

The Organization of Rehabilitation and Training (ORT) partnered with local disabled people's organizations (DPO) in Montenegro to provide physical therapy, healthcare, legal services, education and personal at-home assistance to persons with disabilities. Youth with disabilities took part in recreational opportunities and peer-to-peer exchanges through this project.

INDONESIA | Fakhry's Story

▶ Youth with disabilities led team-building activities for 17,000 students of the Kostanay region in Kazakhstan.

This activity, part of the *Empowerment Now!* public information campaign supported by USAID, aims to create a positive perception of people with disabilities, as well as an equitable and respectful attitude toward them.



Civil Society Development Association, Kazakhstan



USAID recognizes that youth, including **youth with disabilities**, are poised to be important actors in the development of their countries and communities.



Helen Keller International

▲ Fakhry Muhammad, a 13-year-old student from West Jakarta, Indonesia, uses screen reader technology on his school computer.

"I have so many friends in this school that always makes me happy. Unlike in my previous school—the Special School—the students were so few and it was very quiet there. As I found more challenges here, I also learned a lot in this regular school. My favorite lesson is computer. I can make my own website now and am still learning computer programming. I want to be like my idol, Bill Gates, one day who owns the biggest computer software in the world." —FAKHRY MUHAMMAD



Paul Jeffrey CBM/US

▲ Anishah Masaire (above), 11 years old, wants to be a pilot when she grows up. For now, however, she's happy attending school in Harare, Zimbabwe. Anishah says she's studying hard because she wants to go far. Not to mention high. She says she'd especially like to pilot helicopters.



The sky is the limit for youth with disabilities who gain access to quality education. Today's youth are tomorrow's wage earners, entrepreneurs, educators and innovators.



Anne Hayes

▲ Javier Torres, a disability rights leader, enters a public office building in Ecuador.



Equipped with education, an accessible environment and the right tools, persons with disabilities are able to navigate the world and participate fully in all aspects of life.



Chelsea Catlin

▲ A group of young Haitian athletes gather in the field with their coaches after an afternoon football match.



EcoSports Group

▲ Scuba divers (above) pause for a photo while practicing in the waters of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Tim Berridge, BlazeSports

▲ Two young men practice football (right) as part of the BlazeSports Paralympic Sports Program in Haiti.

The Rehabilitation and Social Reintegration of People with Disabilities through Water Sports project, implemented by EcoSports, provided opportunities for youth with physical, sensorial and psychosocial disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina to participate in a variety of water sports, allowing them access to rehabilitation in a natural setting. Participants received professional certification in scuba, rafting and other recreation activities.



Sport has the power to connect people across cultures, languages and beliefs; it can advance shared objectives around health, education, peacekeeping and gender equality.

- ▶ A group tours the National Botanical Garden in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (top), using the newly constructed, fully accessible pathway. The pathway includes informational signs in braille, accessible picnic areas and restrooms.
- ▶ A man (bottom) reads about the flora and fauna of the botanical garden using the braille panels.



Marvin Cid, Diario Libre



Karen Pannochia, Dominican Consortium for Tourism Competitiveness



Karen Pannochia, Dominican Consortium for Tourism Competitiveness

- ▶ Two women explore the information signs along the way.



Creating accessible environments is another way USAID supports the full participation of persons with disabilities in society.



Suparta, IFES

▲ A voter casts her ballot in Aceh during the 2009 Indonesian legislative elections. With support from USAID, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has promoted electoral and political enfranchisement of persons with disabilities around the world.



USAID projects around the world work to foster **inclusive political participation** where persons with disabilities have the right to vote and can exercise it freely and without barriers, physical or otherwise.



Community Center for the Disabled, Afghanistan

▲ Shah Mohammad lives in Kabul with his three siblings and mother. After finishing a six-month metalwork course he started his own business. Now he is able to earn enough to support his family. Shah plans to continue growing his business: "I would like to expand my metalwork to attract more customers," he said.

The *Strengthening Communities and Empowering Persons with Disabilities* project in Afghanistan, implemented by the Community Center for the Disabled, has provided technical, vocational and business management skills and financial capital to individuals with disabilities to start and sustain their own businesses.



USAID recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equitable basis with others, and understands that access to **meaningful work and employment** is critical for persons with disabilities to escape the cycle of poverty.

Elisabeth's Story



Richard Nyberg, USAID

▲ Elisabeth and her son, Jonas, rest outside their home in Casamance, Senegal.

Elisabeth Nassalan had a normal life in Senegal's southern Casamance region near the village of Djifanghor. A wife and mother of six, Elisabeth tended to gardens that produced enough tomatoes, peanuts and okra to sell at local markets and support her family.

But while harvesting mangoes in September 2001, she stepped on a landmine and lost both legs.

After a three-month recovery in the hospital, Elisabeth returned home to find that her husband had abandoned her. Newly disabled, it was difficult for Elisabeth to return to her work on the farm.

With support from USAID, Elisabeth opened a small shop in her house, selling soap, oil, coffee and matches to local villagers.

“At the beginning it was terribly difficult, as I had the children and didn't think I could provide them a decent education and success in life,” Elisabeth said. “But now, even though I am alone, I am able to earn money and care for my children. The assistance I have received has helped me greatly in making a fresh start.”

“Work goes well, I am pleased, I work independently. I don't get tired. Everybody respects me [and] I respect them.”

—DENIS

► Denis (right) works for a major publishing company in Albania.

The *Economic Empowerment of People with Disabilities* project, implemented by the Albania Disability Rights Foundation, has partnered with the national vocational training and labor agencies in Albania to ensure public training programs and services are inclusive of youth with disabilities.



Elton Baxhaku



USAID projects around the world are integrating youth and adults with disabilities into **competitive employment** within both the public and private sectors.

Monika's Story



Ivana Stihnoska, My Career

▲ Monika Kraljevska (above) works at Pronto-Kumanovo, a shoe company in Macedonia.

“Now, when I am employed, I am not asking my parents for money. I could buy whatever I want, to buy groceries, to have coffee with my friends, I can even buy presents for my sisters. I am planning ahead what I am going to buy for myself from my next salary. I am very happy that I have the opportunity to work and earn money. The feeling that I am not useful has disappeared.” —MONIKA KRALJEVSKA



Gorjan Slavkovski, Youth Can

▲ A group of youth gather to celebrate the completion of a Work Readiness Skills Curriculum workshop. “We have improved our employability skills far more than we expected,” says one participant.

In Macedonia, the *Youth Employability Skills Network* project, implemented by the Education Development Center, has paved the way towards full inclusion in workforce training and work-based learning opportunities by equipping career centers with the technology and training necessary to better serve youth with disabilities.



Sharing best practices and **raising awareness among employers** and employment service agencies results in higher job placements and retention rates for persons with disabilities.

ALBANIA | Lidia's Story



Fundación Saraki

▲ María de los Angeles Escobar Espínola (above), delivers remarks during the Second International Seminar on Labor Inclusion and Social Corporate Responsibility in Paraguay.

“Learn from me and I will learn from you.” —MARÍA DE LOS ANGELES ESCOBAR ESPÍNOLA

With these words, María de los Angeles Escobar Espínola concluded her speech during the International Seminar. She was wildly applauded by over 400 participants, representing private companies willing to bet on inclusion as a profitable business. A beneficiary of USAID's *Effective Labor Inclusion* project implemented by Fundación Saraki, María de los Angeles currently works for Paraguay's National Procurement Office.



Elton Baxhaku

“I am very happy that I was offered the opportunity to put in life my investment, at the Academy of Arts, Painting branch. I feel very good at the institution where I work. My colleagues once were my teachers, and my work as a drawing teacher for my students gives me pleasure.”

—LIDIA, Teacher at the Institute of Deaf Students



Fundación Saraki

▲ Luis Alberto "Beto" Aquilera (above) works diligently at the job he secured through USAID/Paraguay's *Effective Labor Inclusion* program.

"I am very lucky to be working, because it is difficult to find a job, and more so for people with disabilities. My life has changed completely since I started this new stage; it feels good being important and useful for others, that people trust you and give you opportunities." —LUIS ALBERTO "BETO" AQUILERA



World Vision

▲ In Armenia, two women with disabilities conduct a street poll to measure public perception of disability, as part of the *Building Disabled People's Organization Outreach for Greater Disability Inclusiveness* project implemented by World Vision.



USAID programs **raise awareness** of the rights, capabilities and contributions of women with disabilities to foster respect and combat stereotypes and prejudices.



Civil Society Development Association

“We came together here today to show that we are the same as everyone else. We want to share our optimism with others. We love life and do not believe that disability is a sentence... We hope that with today’s performance we can make others forget their prejudices and change their attitude to people like us. We want to be perceived as equal and socially active members of our society.”

—MARIYA TARASOVA, member of a local Disabled People’s Organization and participant in USAID/Kazakhstan’s Empowerment Now! Project



Public Awareness campaigns **promote positive perceptions** and greater social awareness toward persons with disabilities.



Fundación Sasaki

▲ Juan Ramón Santander (green jacket) and Hermes Díaz (blue jacket), listen as colleagues speak during a Disabled People’s Organization Forum held at the Paraguayan Congress, in 2011.



Nothing about us, without us. USAID partners with disabled people’s organizations worldwide and recognizes their unique contributions to the development of inclusive societies.



David Justice, Discovering Deaf Worlds

“In the past I had limited access to new skills training; but thanks to USAID, the Philippine Federation of the Deaf, and Discovering Deaf Worlds, I have learned so much from Deaf professionals from America. When I go home [to Dumaguete City] and teach Deaf people in my community what I’ve learned, I see that they are inspired—they feel that they too can become leaders. I hope these partnerships will continue for a long, long time!”

—JESSIE SUSAN N. FLORES, president of the Dumaguete Effata Association of the Deaf, and participant in the Expanding Participation of People with Disabilities in the Philippines project



Leadership training builds the capacity of persons with disabilities to better advocate for their rights and be fully contributing citizens.



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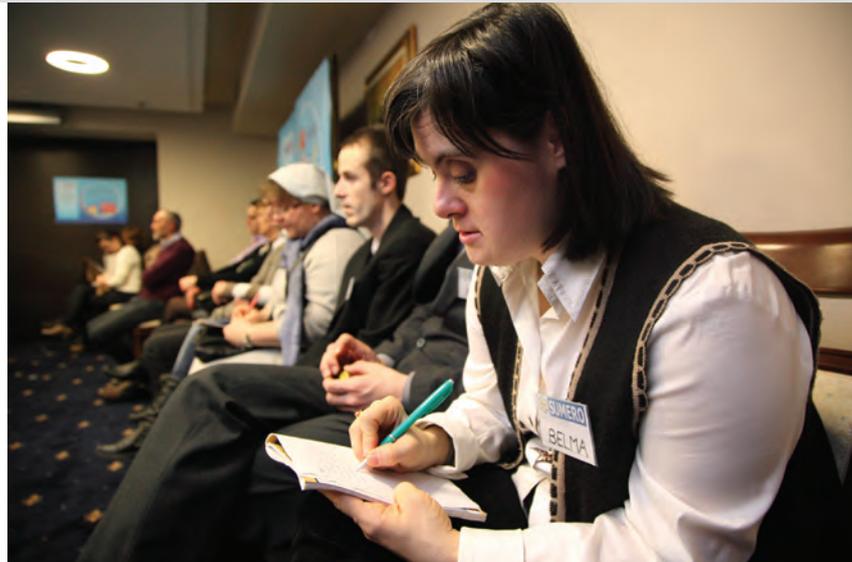
“Before my participation in WILD, my work was mostly devoted to the community of blind people, but now I will champion the knocking down of all barriers in the disability movement. I now have a better understanding of the need for all disability groups to work together as one strong force and also the importance of working with non-disabled members of the society to achieve positive change. I have learned that the problems that people, especially women and girls with disabilities face, are not environment-specific; they are the same everywhere and cannot be properly addressed in isolation. A solution learned from Nigeria can be used to solve a problem in Bolivia.”

—SARAH AKINOLA (back row, left), WILD alumna from Nigeria

The Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD), implemented by Mobility International USA, has provided leadership training to women with disabilities from around the world.



A solution learned from Nigeria can be used to solve a problem in Bolivia.



Vanja Cerinagic

▲ Belma Dzbur (above), participates in discussions with representatives of her government in Bosnia and Herzegovina. “My engagement through this project has changed my life in a positive way. My voice now reaches persons who can improve the quality of life of persons with disabilities. Also, the project provides me with new skills, to use a computer, to be an active member of the local community, to be active through a number of activities with my friends,” she says.

The *Empowerment and Rehabilitation for People with Disabilities in Bosnia and Herzegovina* project, implemented by the Union of Organizations for Support to the Persons with Intellectual Disability (SUMERO), has provided training to persons with intellectual disabilities and Disabled People’s Organizations to advocate for their rights and engage directly with government leaders.



Societies are inclusive when the **voice and agency** of all individuals to speak and be heard, and to shape and share in discourse and decisions, is realized.



Fundación Saraki

▲ Disability rights advocates, Luis Alberto Aguilera, Rosita Battilana and Werner Martinez (above) submit a draft regulatory framework to Minister Lilian Soto at the House of Representatives.

In Paraguay, the *Effective Labor Inclusion* project, implemented by Fundación Saraki, has increased access and effective participation of DPOs and persons with disabilities in decision-making processes within government institutions. Both the mandatory quota for employment of persons with disabilities in the public sector and its regulatory framework were developed under this project.



Lasha Kuprashvili, Coalition For Independent Living

“I have come to realize that life does not end at the wheels. I learned how to protect my rights. Now I never refuse to participate in flashmobs, outdoor campaigns and anything that’s related to public education. It gives me a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate that we are a part of this society.”

—TINATIN REVAZASHVILI, participant in USAID/Georgia’s Disability Advocacy Project, implemented by the Coalition for Independent Living



As USAID works to **end extreme poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies**, we recognize that all members of society must be fully engaged, including persons with disabilities.



Lasha Kuprashvili, Coalition For Independent Living

“Working on [the] Disability Advocacy Project gave me the opportunity to meet people like me and to popularize the topic of disability, empower persons with disabilities and promote their rights and interests. Together we can achieve a lot.” —RATI IONATAMISHVILI, Coalition For Independent Living, Georgia



Disability Rights **are** Human Rights.

Acknowledgments

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Fundación Saraki

Helen Keller International

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

Mobility International USA

My Career

Open the Windows

Organization of Rehabilitation and Training

Save the Children

Ukrainian Step by Step Foundation

Union of Organizations for Support
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World Vision

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