

# ALERT

An Update on ATLAS/Advanced Training for Leadership and Skills

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## Creating an Environment for the Disabled: Leadership's Role

The statement "nothing about us without us" made by Khalfan Khalfan of Zanzibar, captured the importance of involving people with disabilities in discussions concerning them, and set the tone of the ATLAS conference held in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. The theme of the meeting was "Creating an Environment for the Disabled: Leadership's Role." The goal was to bring together individuals working in leadership positions to develop strategies for using their expertise to make a greater impact on the issues concerning people with disabilities.

Forty delegates from twelve countries: Cameroon, Cape Verde, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda and the United States attended the five day meeting held from September 13-17. They represented government ministries, education and training institutions, health agencies, private sector business, law and science. The majority of the delegates were alumni of USAID sponsored training programs including AFGRAD and ATLAS.

The agenda centered on three topics: equal rights and advocacy; education and workforce development; and technology tools. The presentations provided an informative background on the state of affairs for people with disabilities in the countries represented, and current initiatives underway to address the problems faced by people with disabilities. The discussions focused on strategies that can be implemented at the local, national, regional and global level.

Stanley Baker, Deputy Director of USAID/Tanzania and Simon Mponji, Interim Chairman of the American Alumni Association of Tanzania were among the guests who spoke to the delegates during the Opening Ceremony. Mr. Baker emphasized the importance of the conference as reflective of USAID's policy initiative to address the physical, social and cultural difficulties facing people with disabilities. Mr. Mponji welcomed the delegates to Tanzania.



John Moyo from Tanzania (left) and Dr. Peter Mba from Nigeria (right) communicating in sign language

The Keynote Speaker for the conference was the Honorable Mrs. Mary Karumuna, a member of the Tanzania House of Parliament. Mrs. Karumuna, who is visually impaired, has championed the concerns of people with disabilities. In her remarks she pointed out that although the world is preparing for the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, which is being heralded as the century of science and technology, people in developing countries have been bypassed by these developments. The majority of the world's population still face problems of basic survival including access to clean water and healthcare; for people with disabilities, the situation is even worse.

In the areas of technology, the formulation of policy without the involvement of people with disabilities, the high cost of assistive devices to help them, and the lack of access to education and training were identified as some of the main obstacles that prevent people with disabilities from full participation in society. The delegates also raised the point that although it is generally accepted that we live in the "information age," the lack of information as well as a mechanism to share and collectively develop solutions, are key to addressing the seemingly overwhelming challenges at hand.

*(continued on page 2)*

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The recognition that the disability issue is a human rights issue was identified as a major concern during the exchange on equal rights and advocacy. The use of offensive terms and discrimination in employment, the failure to enforce laws against discrimination, and the need for more support for non-governmental organizations working with people with disabilities were also raised. During the discussions, it was acknowledged that education and training requires not only more resources, but also a more thoughtful approach. The debate continues as to whether people with disabilities require special education or should be included in main stream settings. Nonetheless, the importance of education and training, including research on the best teaching methods and appropriate curriculum, are also important factors that must be addressed to ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to make the most of their skills and talent.

Dr. Wayne Patterson, Professor of Computer Science at Howard University and the University of South Carolina, and member of the ATLAS Executive Committee of Graduate Deans, began his presentation on "Adaptive Technology: Making the Information Society Accessible to the Disabled," with a demonstration of the features in the Microsoft Windows operating system that can be adjusted to meet the needs of people with disabilities. He also demonstrated special devices for people with limited or no hand and finger movement, and those who are fully paraplegic. Among the devices were pointing devices such as touch pads, track balls, head masters, and suck-puff tubes. The group was particularly interested in his demonstration of speech recognition software. Dr. Patterson concluded his presentation with the acknowledgement that although it is possible to include people with disabilities in the "information society," the costs of assistive technology will hinder its use by the majority of the population who could most benefit from its use.

Mr. Khalfan Khalfan, Chairperson of the Zanzibar Association of People with Disabilities described the effectiveness of his organization's work in implementing a community based rehabilitation program for prevention, rehabilitation and integration. He also spoke of the plans underway to implement the African Decade of Disabled People (2000-2009). (see story on page 5)

The traditional denial of the right to education for people with disabilities is exemplified in Nigeria, according to Dr. Peter Mba in his presentation on special education in Nigeria. Until a few years ago, in a population of over 100 million, fewer than 2000 children with disabilities were enrolled in school. Since that time, the government has declared education free for people with disabilities, and more schools with teachers trained in special education have been established. He called for the periodic identification of children with disabilities as part of the public school program undertaken in conjunction with health authorities. Dr. Mba, who has a hearing impairment, is a pioneer in special education in Nigeria and received a Distinguished AFGRAD/ATLAS Alumni Award for this work as the founding president of the Nigeria Association of Special Education Teachers.

David Cardoso from Cape Verde (seated) and Mzolis Ka Toni from South Africa.



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Dr. Ahlonkoba Aquereburu of the National AIDS program in Togo, and Johnson Jasson, Director of the Human Rights Center for Disabled People (HRCDP) in Tanzania, addressed the topic of equal rights and advocacy. HRCDP offers counseling to people with disabilities and works to sensitize the general public. In his presentation on equal rights, Mr. Jasson pointed out that despite the existence of laws in Tanzania to protect people with disabilities, policymakers and government attitudes have been two major stumbling blocks.

Dr Aquereburu emphasized the impact the international community can have in addressing the quality of life needs for people with disabilities. In developing countries, as many as 80% of all people with disabilities live in an isolated rural area. In some of these countries, they are estimated to account for 20% of the population. Ensuring that people with disabilities play an active role in society and make a meaningful contribution is important not only for their personal development, but also the, sustainable development of these countries.

Disability is often perceived as a result of a supernatural cause in traditional societies. This attitude often results in children with disabilities being hidden, stated Dr. Araba Sefa-Dede in her presentation on the plight of the intellectually challenged in Ghana. Although the estimated population of children with disabilities in Ghana is estimated at 1.5 million, the number of those who are intellectually challenged is unknown. She cited the Community Based Rehabilitative Program of Ghana as an example of a collaborative effort between communities and government to integrate people with disabilities.

During the panel on "Views From the Field" Mzolisi Toni from South Africa, Humberto Brito from Cape Verde, and Himatlal Shah of Tanzania spoke about the initiatives in their countries. Mr. Toni is Deputy Secretary of Disabled People South Africa (DPSA), started in 1984 by people with disabilities to deal with their own problems. DPSA convinced the government to formulate a policy document and create a desk in the Deputy President's office that coordinates government initiatives related to people with disabilities.

Humberto Brito, a hospital administrator in Cape Verde, reported that two percent of the country's population are people with disabilities. Although the government gave little attention to people with disabilities until the 1980 International Year for the Disabled, the constitution does recognize their rights with laws to protect them. A Community Rehabilitation Program has been initiated to carry our policies on education and social integration.

Himatlal Shah is the director of Shah Industries, which employs people with disabilities. He emphasized that people with disabilities can become valued mem-



Hon. Mary Karumuna from Tanzania, (left) reading from braille text as ATLAS Chief Niamani Mutima, and USAID/Tanzania Deputy Director, Stafford Baker listen.

bers of the workforce if given the proper training and encouragement. Unfortunately, the government of Tanzania does not give any special consideration to companies employing people with disabilities. As a result of the recent economic hardships, when cuts to the workforce are made, people with disabilities are the first ones to suffer.

The conference concluded with recommendations adopted by the delegates, with the consensus that they would take these recommendations back to their home countries and institutions and use them as a framework for improving conditions for people with disabilities. Incentives to businesses to employ people with disabilities, immediate ratification of international conventions ensuring human rights, and clear and enforced policies on access to education were among the recommendations. In addition, research institutions, governments and NGOs should initiate activities to develop the capacity to manufacture and repair devices for people with disabilities.

At the conclusion of the conference, the delegates agreed that it was a rare opportunity to discuss an important topic with people working in key leadership positions in Africa and the United States. The presentations revealed that although there has been a great deal of research on people with disabilities, there is a need for more research and a wider dissemination of information. The challenges of the new millennium include the challenge to ensure that people with disabilities are engaged as full partners in sustainable development activities. †

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# Alumni Corner

*The ATLAS conference in Tanzania provided an opportunity for alumni to share information with each other regarding the challenges facing people with disabilities in their countries, and use what they learned from the conference in their current activities.*

**Jean-Pierre Mpina of Cameroon** is a graduate of New York University with a Masters degree in Business Administration. He is the Director of Studies and Cooperation with the Cocoa Development Corporation in Cameroon. Jean-Pierre feels that one challenge faced by people with disabilities in Cameroon is the lack of education and training. He attended the conference hoping to learn how to integrate people with disabilities into the development process. His perception on equal rights and advocacy for people with disabilities: *"In front of the law all people are equal, but in practice the disabled are considered as less than human."*

**Hadiatou Balde from Guinea** received her Masters in Public Health at Southern Illinois University. She is the Chief of Hematology and Oncology with the Ministry of Health. Hadiatou thinks that major challenges for people with disabilities are rejection from the educational system, and the lack of technology tools. As AIDS and cancer stricken patients in Guinea are considered people with disabilities, she attended the conference to learn strategies for dealing with them. Her thoughts on equal rights and advocacy for people with disabilities: *"They don't seem to have the same rights."*

**Sarah Banenya from Uganda** is a graduate of American University with a Masters in International Law. She is the Executive Director of the Uganda Association of Women Lawyers. Sarah believes that changing the negative attitudes toward people with disabilities will be a major challenge in Uganda. She attended the conference to gain and share knowledge as an advocate. Her ideas on equal rights and advocacy for people with disabilities: *"Educated people with disabilities are few, hence there's no one on the front line."*



From left to right: Dr. Ahlonkoba Aquereburu from Togo, Hadiatou Balde and Mamadou Diallo from Guinea, and Adama Kane from Senegal.



From left to right: Dr. Julienne Ngo-Som and Jean-Pierre Mpina from Cameroon, and Ama Afo Blay from Ghana.

**Mamadou Diallo from Guinea** received his Doctorate degree in Animal Science from the University of Minnesota. He is a Project Coordinator for Concern Universal. In Mamadou's view a challenge facing people with disabilities in Guinea is education and training so that they can sustain themselves financially. As Concern Universal is a humanitarian organization that deals with refugees, some being people with disabilities, he attended the conference to exchange knowledge and learn how to provide people with disabilities with the best service possible. He believes the best way to seek equal rights and advocacy for people with disabilities is to: *"Teach them how to organize, petition for support and be self-confident."*

**Ama Afo Blay from Ghana** is a graduate of Emporia State University with a Masters in Guidance & Counseling. She is the Director of the Ghana Education Service. Ama thinks the lack of access to technology is a major challenge facing people with disabilities in Ghana, as well as inadequately trained teachers. She attended the conference hoping to learn new ways to improve the Ghana Education Service's system of mainstreaming people with disabilities. Her opinion on equal rights and advocacy for people with disabilities: *"The laws have been established on paper but are not translated into practice."*

**Ahlonkoba Aquereburu from Togo** holds a Masters degree in Public Health from the University of Hawaii. She is the Head of Counseling and Diagnostic Unit in the Vocational AIDS program for the Ministry of Health. Ahlonkoba believes a lack of education and training is one of the many challenges for people with disabilities. She attended the conference to learn how to develop strategies for advocating the rights of people with disabilities. She says that equal rights and advocacy for people with disabilities: *"is an area that needs to be strengthened."*

**Christine Watera from Uganda** graduated from Tulane University with a Masters in Public Health. She is an AIDS Clinical Researcher for the Medical Re-

search Council and The AIDS Support Organization. Christine believes that among the many challenges facing people with disabilities are the lack of equipment for transportation, and educational and training opportunities. In addition, there is a lack of specialized teachers training. She attended the conference to learn and share experiences, and to develop strategies for advocating the rights of people with disabilities. Regarding equal rights and advocacy for people with disabilities, she believes that: *"Discrimination in property ownership is an issue."*

**Julienne Ngo-Som from Cameroon** is a graduate of Kansas State University with a Doctorate degree in Food Science and Technology. She is the Chief Research Officer at the Ministry of Scientific & Technical Research, and Head of Technological Development at the Research Center for Food. Julienne sees the lack of training facilities equipped to accommodate people with disabilities as a challenge. She attended the conference to exchange information and share her experiences working with people with disabilities. Her thoughts on equal rights and advocacy for people with disabilities: *"Leadership and public awareness is lacking."*

**Adama Kane from Senegal** holds a Masters degree in Public Health from the University of Massachusetts. He is the Municipal Director at the Abasse Ndao Hospital. Adama feels that the challenges facing people with disabilities are the short supply of funds for technology tools, and a lack of public awareness and social acceptance. He attended the conference to learn how to help people with disabilities attain financial independence. His views on equal rights and advocacy for people with disabilities: *"Access to medical care is more difficult for them."*

**John Okiror from Uganda** holds a Masters degree in Agricultural Education from Oklahoma State University. He is a Lecturer for the Ministry of Education at the National Teacher's College. The shortage of technological tools, and the social stigmas are two main challenges for people with disabilities. He attended the conference to find ways to help people with disabilities in his community. His views on equal rights and advocacy for people with disabilities: *"Because of the*

*low number of educated people with disabilities there is very little representation."*



From left to right: Sarah Banenya, John Okiror, and Christine Watera from Uganda.

## African Decade of Disabled Persons 2000-2009

*"Progressive policies, and legislation to protect and empower people with disabilities are our greatest hopes for the Decade."*

*Joshua Malinga, Secretary General of PAFOD*

**T**he period from 1983-1992 marked the implementation of the UN Decade of Disabled Persons to bring attention to the needs of people with disabilities throughout the world. Given the UN Decade's concentration on the global perspective, many felt it did little to bring significant attention to the needs of people with disabilities in Africa.

In December 1998, delegates who attended the Disabled People's International (DPI) Fifth World Assembly in Mexico voted to organize the African Decade of Disabled People to bring attention to the need for African solutions to the problems facing people with disabilities in Africa. DPI is a grassroots, cross-disability network with member organizations in over 110 countries. Their purpose is to promote the human rights of people with disabilities through full participation, equalization of opportunity and development. The Pan African Federation of the Disabled (PAFOD) was appointed to plan and coordinate the activities.

Many international organizations of people with disabilities are supporting the Decade. Among them are Inclusion International, the World Federation of the Deaf, and the International Organization of the Deaf and Blind; all of which will be members of a committee working with PAFOD. Regional organizations such as the Organization of African Unity, the African Rehabilitation Institute, the Economic Commission for Africa, and the International Labor Organization will also participate.

Decade activities hope to alleviate poverty among people with disabilities, raise awareness, and place the needs of people with disabilities on the social and economic agendas of African governments.

Regional Federations of the Disabled will work with PAFOD to organize events and implement activities that reflect the cultural differences of each region. In addition, meetings will be held to provide region-to-region assistance with strategies for implementing activities.

The African Decade of Disabled People is a good concept that is expected to create positive change, but needs the commitment of governments and communities to succeed.

For further information contact: Mr. Joshua Malinga, Secretary General, PAFOD, PO Box 2213, Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, Tel: 011.263.9.741.33/667.64, fax: 011.263.9.680.23/e-mail: safod@telconet.co.za †

## Linking Research and Practical Training to Strategic Objectives

### Economic Growth and Agricultural Development

Economic Growth and Agricultural Development is one of the major Strategic Objectives of USAID and relevant research addressing economic growth plays an important role in achieving this objective. **Mr. Charles Josob of Namibia**, an ATLAS fellow pursuing his master's degree in International Development at Clark University, studied the progress of the African Economic Community (AEC) with special emphasis on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) during the summer of 1999.

His Master's thesis, "African Economic Integration - A Pipedream or Reality: What Can We Learn From SADC?" examines the progress of SADC to determine how realistic AEC time frames are for other African regional groupings, and for African economic integration as a whole. His research is valuable given the struggle of African nations to foster the economic growth and security that other nations have achieved through regional economic organizations.

**Ms. Esther Candiru of Uganda**, an MA candidate in International Development at Clark University, spent the summer of 1999 conducting research for her Master's thesis, entitled "Assessing the Impact of Tobacco Growing on the Livelihoods of Rural Farmers: A Case Study of Arua District, Uganda." USAID/Uganda has the Strategic Objective of increasing rural household incomes, and her research will be a useful tool. Ms. Candiru will examine how the cultivation of tobacco as a cash crop has affected rural farmers and identify the structural barriers excluding poor farmers from the decision-making process of the program. Research such as this will inform future planning and evaluation, and policy recommendations from her work will make an important contribution to more effective methods of project implementation.

### Population, Health, and Nutrition

One of Africa's greatest challenges is malnutrition. **Dr. Aliou Ayaba of Benin**, a MPH candidate in International Health at the University of Washington, is doing a case study of households in rural areas of Benin as the basis for his Master's thesis entitled: "Sociocultural and Economic Context of Child Malnutrition in Benin." Dr. Ayaba's study will focus on family size and gender make-up, food production and consumption levels, and dietary practices. Structural adjustment programs in Benin have lowered the purchasing power of the poor, resulting in more commercialization of produced food, and increased consumption of local foods. This study will determine

which household characteristics affect nutrition within this new economic context, and how these characteristics vary between households and communities. Dr. Ayaba's research has policy implications for agricultural development.

**Ms. Fanta Toure of Guinea**, an MS candidate in Food Processing at Oklahoma State University, is developing a possible solution to the serious problem of goiter in her country in her Master's thesis on the "Effect of Seafoods, Including Fish, on Iodine Bioavailability in Cassava- and Millet-Based Staple Food in Guinea." The diet of many Guineans is deficient in iodine, and the staple foods of cassava and millet contain goitrogenic compounds that further inhibit the already limited iodine intake.

Ms. Toure proposes to supplement a local food that is made from cassava and millet, with ground fish as a source of iodine. Initially, she will determine the greatest amount of seafood that could be added to the food while retaining its culinary appeal to the rural people of Guinea. Then she will analyze the availability of iodine from the fortified food using laboratory rats. If successful, Ms. Toure will make a valuable contribution to the fight against Goiter in Guinea.

### Natural Resource Management

USAID/Guinea may soon have valuable assistance in meeting its Strategic Objective of Increased Use of Sustainable Natural Resource Management Practices. **Mr. Abdoulaye Keita of Guinea**, an ATLAS fellow pursuing an MS in Natural Resources and Environmental Management, from Ball State University is doing research to determine the most cost effective means of establishing wastewater treatment in Guinea. His Master's thesis title is "The Relative Ecological Effectiveness and Economic Efficiency of Four Wastewater Treatment Plants in East Central Indiana and Possibility of Technology Transfer to Guinea."

There are no wastewater treatment facilities in Guinea; and untreated wastewater contributes to numerous environmental and public health problems. Mr. Keita will compare the ecological effectiveness and economic efficiency of four wastewater treatment plants in the US. He will also gather information about diseases related to untreated wastewater, and conduct an inventory and evaluation of existing wastewater management equipment in Guinea. Results from Guinea will be compared with results from the US treatment plant to determine the feasibility of applying modern wastewater management techniques in Guinea. Mr. Keita's research is a useful tool in addressing one of Guinea's major environmental and public health concerns. †

## Looking to the Future of Liberia

**V**ictor N. Fasama, from Liberia, expects to finish his Masters Degree in Economic Policy Management in December 1999 at Columbia University in New York. For the last six months he has worked as an intern at the World Bank's Development Economics Department Research Group in Washington, D.C.

Prior to his arrival in the United States, Mr. Fasama worked as a Research Officer in the External Aid Coordination Division of Liberia's Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs.

Liberia, a country devastated by seven years of civil war, has a population of 3 million, with an illiteracy rate of 85%. The government is working to comply with the urgings of the international community to take the lead in the country's reconstruction by restoring good governance. Mr. Fasama believes that with the proper mechanisms and a trained workforce, Liberia can become economically sound.

Policy issues, growth patterns, and the structures of different economies around the world will remain his

concern, and he looks forward to returning to the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs as a Development Economist.



Victor Fasama

Commenting on his U.S. experience during the ATLAS program Mr. Fasama said:

*"Being at Columbia University provided a unique experience for me. Not only did I gain more knowledge and greater insights in the field of economics, but I also had the wonderful opportunity to study along with colleagues from thirty-eight different countries representing five of the six continents! The exchange of ideas and debates with this group broadened my horizon on issues confronting our common world."*

*"At the World Bank I was a Research Assistant and my work exposed me to more analytical techniques and mechanisms for determining policy options. I learned first hand how the Bank operates especially in its dealing with developing countries."* †

## A Champion of People With Disabilities

**T**he September, 1998 issue of ATLAS ALERT featured Gideon Mandesi, an ATLAS Fellow who was beginning his one year program in International Legal Studies at American University in Washington, D.C. Mr. Mandesi also did an internship with Mental Disability Rights International, helping to design new advocacy projects and programs in developing countries. Although he has been blind since childhood, Mr. Mandesi has worked to remove the obstacles he has faced as a person with a disability.

He was refused entrance to the University of Dar es Salaam Law School because there were no textbooks in braille. He spent the next year translating the Tanzanian Code of Law into Braille and was then admitted. His textbook is now available for other visually impaired students. After his graduation in 1995, he worked as a State Attorney for the Ministry for Justice, and then joined the Ministry for Labor. In 1998 he established the Disabled Organization for Legal Affairs and Social Economic Development, (DOLASED).



Gideon Mandesi and his wife, Sylvia.

During his stay in the US, Mr. Mandesi has been in contact with government and international organization officials involved in advocating the rights of people with disabilities. He has had discussions with staff members of the Office of Public Liaison at the White House, the Presidential Task Force on Employment of Adults with Disabilities, and the Disability Rights Section of the Department of Justice. He has also met with international organizations including the USAID Disability Policy Team, the World Bank Africa Program and the United Nations.

Mr. Mandesi's thesis, entitled, "Universal Human Rights Standards on Disability Rights" is a comprehensive study that examines education, training, employment and sustainable development. In recognition of his work, he was invited to make a presentation at the International Law Association Conference held in New York. He has also been invited to Hong Kong to present at the Interregional Seminar and Symposium on International Norms and Standards Relating to Disability

Mr. Mandesi will resume his job at the Ministry of Labor when he returns to Tanzania in December. He plans to establish a Sustainable Development Project for the Disabled, including a research and documentation center and affirmative action program for women and children. †

## Deans Corner

In September, I had the pleasure of addressing the ATLAS conference on people with disabilities in Dar es Salaam. Very few of the participants knew each other, since we came from many countries, spoke many different languages, studied and taught at many different universities, and came from many different professions. This would also normally add to the difficulty in developing any unanimity of purpose or cohesiveness over the short period of time afforded by the conference format.



Dr. Wayne Patterson

Whether because of the marvelous leadership of Niamani Mutima in organizing the conference, the generous spirit of the participants, the high quality of the alumni of AFGRAD/ATLAS, or the importance of the conference topic — more likely all of the above — I believe that we were able to leave Dar with a sense that a community had been formed, that we had a common sense of purpose in advocating policy regarding persons with disabilities, and that we would serve as a “ginger group” in keeping these issues on the front burner.

My belief has been reinforced by the number of emails and letters that I have received from conference participants in the short time since our return. I continue to be impressed and honored to have developed relationships with my conference participant colleagues — but then again, I am rarely less than impressed by the caliber of individual who successfully completes the ATLAS program and who returns to his or her home country to contribute to its development.

My role was to discuss computer technologies, hardware and software, that are specifically designed for use by persons with disabilities. In earlier generations, a physical disability disqualified individuals from being able to participate fully in society. However, there are technological advances, both in hardware and in software, that allow persons with even very severe disabilities to work successfully in the information industry. In particular, I addressed the field that is now called either adaptive technology or assistive technology. (see story page 2). This area of technological development enables people with disabilities to have access to the full range of services and opportunities that are available in this increasingly cybernetic society. I was also able to demonstrate most of the related hardware and software technologies. One important issue was the discussion of cost, availability, and use in the African context. Many of the relevant technologies are surprisingly low-cost; some are even free.

*(To obtain a copy of Dr. Patterson's paper, "Adaptive Technology: Making the Information Society Accessible Persons with Disabilities" please contact him via email at: wpatterson@cgs.nche.edu).*

A set of issues that should form important components of public policy development regarding issues related to persons with disabilities was elaborated, and the Conference focused on addressing such issues in the areas of education, technology, and access. Many good ideas emerged, and were packaged into a set of recommendations. Many of these ideas began with the phrase “governments should ...”

What was perhaps as important as the recommendations, was the concept that emerged that one cannot say that governments should do something without realizing that governments are us! I believe the conference participants accepted this idea, and with it, the responsibility for carrying forth these important ideas in their own environments. This acceptance of ownership of these ideas, I believe, brought us all much closer together, and undoubtedly has facilitated an ongoing communication and cohesiveness. †

## ATLAS Conferences in 2000 to Address Economic Growth and HIV/AIDs

Plans are underway for the next two ATLAS conferences in 2000. ATLAS conferences are designed to involve alumni of USAID sponsored training programs in developing strategies to use their skills and expertise to make a positive impact on the institutions where they work, and the development challenges of their countries. These gatherings provide a forum for dialogue, information exchange, and promoting professional networks.

The first conference will focus on agricultural economic development and is tentatively scheduled for April, 2000 in Namibia. Although a significant number of developing nations have achieved broad-based economic growth and significantly improved living standards, others continue to struggle to reduce poverty levels. This conference will bring together alumni to share strategies that have been effective, and to develop new ones to address agricultural issues and their impact on economic development.

The second conference is tentatively scheduled for Zambia in August, and will examine the impact of HIV/AIDs, and the role of leadership in addressing its devastating impact at the individual, community, and national levels. Emphasis will be placed on sharing effective strategies, and developing new ones, to mobilize alumni in leadership positions.

For information on the upcoming conference, contact Niamani Mutima, Chief, ATLAS Field Services via email at [nmutima@aaionline.org](mailto:nmutima@aaionline.org) or fax at 212-682-6174. †