



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## Special Programs to Address the Needs of Survivors (SPANS) Disability Program

July 2010

USAID's Disability Program is one of five Congressionally directed programs that comprise the Special Programs to Address the Needs of Survivors (SPANS):

- Displaced Children and Orphans Fund
- Leahy War Victims Fund
- Victims of Torture Program
- Wheelchair Program
- Disability Program

Each of these complimentary funds has its own purpose and strategy, but they share a focus on providing assistance to poor and vulnerable populations. Each emphasizes the value of family and community as the first resort in providing protection, care, and support to vulnerable children, civilian victims of war, torture survivors, and people with disabilities.



Photo courtesy: Micromile/UK

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According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 10 percent of any population has some form of disability. The percentage of people with disabilities is likely higher in war-torn countries. It is estimated that 650 million people throughout the world have a disability, and 80 percent of those are living within developing nations.

People with disabilities (PWD) have been marginalized from traditional development activities due to discrimination or inadvertent barriers. Those barriers have limited the access of people with disabilities to health care, education, employment, and society in general.

Previously, organizations developed separate programs for people with disability rather than trying to integrate them into existing development activities. Although it may be necessary at times to develop separate programs designed to address some specific needs of people with disabilities, it is also extremely important to include people with disabilities in all of our development efforts. It is a basic human right.

### *USAID and Inclusive Development*

In September 1997, USAID adopted a groundbreaking policy, which led to the creation of a clear, detailed framework to guide the Agency's efforts in the areas of disability and inclusive development. The policy states that USAID will not discriminate against people with disabilities and will work to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities in USAID-funded programs and activities. The policy also calls on USAID missions to reach out to partners, host-country counterparts, and other donors to lead a collaborative effort to end discrimination against, and promote equal opportunity for, people with disabilities.

USAID further institutionalized its commitment when it passed two policy directives in 2004 and 2005 mandating that all new construction and major renovations be made accessible and that all requests

or solicitations for funding clearly state how the programs promote and support the 1997 policy.

To implement its disability policy, USAID works to educate its employees on disability issues through courses and workshops. It provides tools and technical assistance to its field missions as they institutionalize the policy, and it has developed self-reporting mechanisms to track the Agency's progress in implementing the policy both in Washington and overseas. USAID has also established a grants program to fund inclusive programming worldwide. This program provides funds directly to USAID missions, encouraging them to engage in inclusive development activities.

### *Strengthening Agency Response*

USAID recognizes that to build an inclusive development community its personnel must have the awareness, tools, and strategies on how to best include people with disabilities in its development programs.

In 2002, USAID launched an E-learning platform to education Agency personnel on how they can incorporate disability-related issues into their work. The self-paced, learner-controlled course contains modules that cover topics such as misconceptions about disability, removing physical and social barriers, inclusive program design, and monitoring and evaluating strategies. The disability community, as well as key USAID partners, played an integral role in designing the course.

In addition to offering the structured online course, USAID also conducts disability-related workshops and orientation sessions for new staff. The objective of these sessions is to educate staff on Agency policy and opportunities, and to stimulate innovative thinking on strategies that will reduce barriers to the participation of people with disabilities in sectoral areas such as education, economic growth, HIV and AIDS, and democracy and governance.

Stemming from a recommendation contained in the *Fifth Report on the Implementation of USAID Disability Policy*, USAID is providing field missions with technical assistance, tools, and resources to develop and implement disability action plans. The action plan, developed by each mission, will clearly articulate and guide these entities on ways in which they will proactively promote the inclusion of people with disabilities.

### *USAID's Disability Fund*

In 2005, Congress established a Disability Fund to compliment USAID's commitment to including PWDs in

development programs and to empowering people with disabilities to advocate for their own rights.

In FY 2010, the budget for USAID's Disability Fund is \$5 million, which serves as an additional resource to encourage disability and inclusive programming pilot programs.

The Disability Fund currently supports programs in more than forty (40) countries, with a strong emphasis on

- raising the awareness in government and the public on issues concerning people with disabilities;
- advocating for rights and services for people with disabilities;
- building the organizational capacities of local disabled persons organizations (DPO); and
- supporting the integration and concerns of people with disabilities into traditional development programs (such as education, health, HIV/AIDS, employment, humanitarian relief, etc) and ensuring their full access to participation in those areas.

### *In Mexico*

USAID supports the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in its work to protect the political rights of persons with disabilities. To do so, the project strengthens the ability of Mexican DPOs to conduct advocacy campaigns. These campaigns promote the recognition of the rights of PWDs and work to improve their access to the electoral process.



*Members of the Mexican Coalition for the Rights of Disabled Persons have used a "shadow report" to document advances made by the Mexican government on its implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Photo courtesy of the National Democratic Institute*

Since 2008, NDI has been working with the Mexican Coalition for the Rights of Disabled Persons (COAMX), a group of five DPOs working to raise awareness of the rights of people with disabilities. NDI has helped COAMX in preparing a "shadow report" to the United Nations, an independent, civic perspective on advances made by the Mexican government in implementing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

NDI helped COAMX establish a timeline, design research methods, hire a report coordinator, and develop a questionnaire to collect information directly from the disabled persons' community. As a result, the coalition is providing the government with information on disability issues that could improve its development of policies for people with disabilities.

### ***In Mongolia***

USAID supports the Fostering an Inclusive Environment for the Disabled (FIELD) project. The project goal is to enhance the ability of people with disabilities to enjoy equal access to social, economic, and political opportunities, as outlined in the CRPD. The project has had nationwide impact through its participation in the development of an important policy that called for new standards in the construction of accessible buildings, and through its fostering of a culture of inclusion in the country.

As an initial step, the project established a diverse multi-agency taskforce with representatives from leading Mongolian organizations and the government. The taskforce developed public awareness campaigns advocating for improvements in the accessibility to public buildings and walkways for people with disabilities.

In February 2010, the "National Standards for Accessible Construction and Walkways" became enforceable under Mongolian law. Although approval of the standards alone will not automatically result in greater access for PWDs, they do create the needed legal foundation for change, and provide specific engineering regulations for current and future buildings throughout the country.

This policy has also motivated disabled people's organizations to strive for the full achievement of accessibility for PWDs in all aspects of life. As a result of the project's campaign, twenty-three (23) accessibility ramps have already been built by government and private-sector agencies at their own expense, and several agencies have also modified their facilities to accommodate the needs of PWDs.

The project has shown that successful public education, advocacy campaigns, collaboration with policymakers, and other activities supporting PWDs

can be designed and delivered by and for local people without significant external resources.

### ***In Russia***

USAID supports the Strengthening and Expanding the National Education for All project, which is implemented by Perspektiva (Regional Society of Disabled People). The project works to ensure educational equality for Russian youth and children, and is using film to educate the public on disability issues. The project sponsors a biennial disability film festival, "Breaking Down Barriers," which educates the public about disability issues and promotes positive images of PWDs.

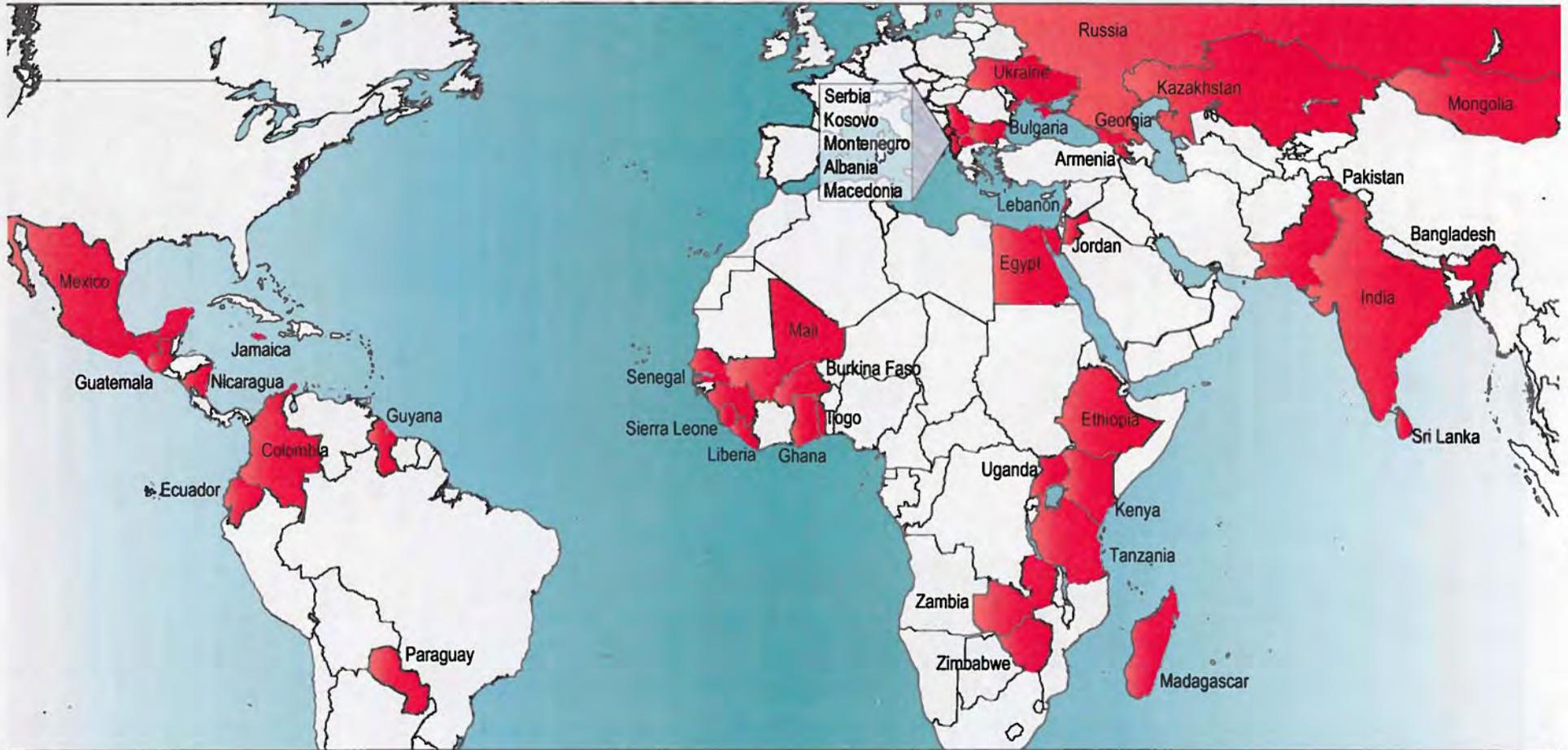
Since the project began organizing the event in 2002, nearly 300 films from thirty (30) countries have been screened. More than 4,000 people have attended festival activities in Moscow, and over 10,000 people attended festival screenings held in twenty (20) regions of Russia and in seven (7) other countries.

The films show real-life issues that disabled people confront every day, from their struggle to look and feel like everyone else to their acceptance of their bodies and minds.



*The USAID-supported Fostering an Inclusive Environment for the Disabled (FIELD) project conducts project activities in Mandalgobi, a town in the Gobi Desert.*

*These activities have offered a twenty-seven-year-old woman with a mobility disability the chance to work, meet people in her community, and learn more about her rights as a person with a disability. She now heads a group for other people with disabilities in her town. Photo courtesy of Mercy Corps.*



# Disability Program Countries

- |            |            |            |              |
|------------|------------|------------|--------------|
| Albania    | Ghana      | Liberia    | Russia       |
| Armenia    | Guatemala  | Macedonia  | Senegal      |
| Bangladesh | Guyana     | Madagascar | Serbia       |
| Bulgaria   | India      | Mali       | Sierra Leone |
| Burkina    | Jamaica    | Mexico     | Sri Lanka    |
| Colombia   | Jordan     | Mongolia   | Tanzania     |
| Ecuador    | Kazakhstan | Montenegro | Togo         |
| Egypt      | Kenya      | Nicaragua  | Uganda       |
| Ethiopia   | Kosovo     | Pakistan   | Zambia       |
| Georgia    | Lebanon    | Paraguay   | Zimbabwe     |

Additional information on SPANS programs for vulnerable children can be found on the USAID website at [http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/humanitarian\\_assistance/the\\_funds](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/humanitarian_assistance/the_funds)

Additional information on USAID Disability Policy and Fund can be found on the USAID website at [http://www.usaid.gov/about\\_usaid/disability/](http://www.usaid.gov/about_usaid/disability/)