



# Zero Project Report 2024

For a world with zero barriers

## Inclusive Education and ICT

77 Innovative Solutions from 43 countries

The annual Report of the Zero Project on innovative solutions supporting the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)



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Report 2024

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Zero Project Report 2023: Independent Living, Political Participation, and ICT

Zero Project Report 2022: Accessibility

Zero Project Report 2021: Employment and ICT

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# “77 innovative solutions that really work!”

FOREWORD BY MARTIN ESSL, FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN OF THE ESSL FOUNDATION



Positive change continues to unfold in our world, despite multiple crises that may sometimes leave us feeling helpless. In our everyday work at the Zero Project, we are lucky to be surrounded by smart and innovative solutions to practical problems. We collaborate with people who are making a difference from almost every part of the world. As part of this collaborative community, we watch the positive changes brought about by this network, getting us closer to a world with zero barriers.

## The Zero Project Conference 2024

The annual Zero Project Conference (#ZeroCon24) will once again bring together more than 1,000 people – with and without disabilities – who are making positive changes from all over the world, gathering at the United Nations Office at Vienna, Austria. During the Conference, we will present 77 Zero Project Awardees from 43 countries. These Awardees are being recognized for their great work in Inclusive Education, and ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

These creative people will present their innovative solutions to the participants in-person in Vienna and virtually around the world, and show how their solutions are making a real impact and can be used in many different places. We are especially happy to see more and more Awardees coming from Africa! Over 80 sessions will cover a range of topics, from Education in Humanitarian Crises to Artificial Intelligence.

## Regional Conference Partnerships

I am particularly delighted to welcome #ZeroCon24 delegations from our strategic partners in India, Latin America, and Singapore. In the course of 2024, we are honoured and proud to organize regional Zero Project Conferences and events with our partners Fundación Descúbreme in Chile, Youth4Jobs in India, and SG Enable in Singapore.

## Zero Project Technology Forum

During the last year we built important partnerships to design and put into action initiatives that focus on the replication of our Awardees' solutions. The first edition of the Zero Project Technology Forum last year was a remarkable success. It is an exclusive event where technology-based innovators present to a selected

audience of multipliers and investors. New connections and communities were created. The second edition this year is supported by UniCredit Bank Austria, Google, Microsoft, and the Seneca Trust.

## Zero Project Scaling Solutions

The Zero Project Scaling Solutions Programme was relaunched this year (previously named “Impact Transfer”) and focuses on scaling Awardees' solutions to new countries and regions. We are working together with Fundación Descúbreme (since 2018), but also with GIZ, Atos, and – as our partner who help us to manage the project – Inclusive Creation from Norway (see also page 9). In 2024, Enable India will also join this distinguished group of disability leaders.

## Inclusive Arts

There is strong proof that being part of and doing things in the arts can make communities stronger, help economies grow, make education better, and improve health and happiness. That's why we want to pay extra attention to Inclusive Arts – as part of the Zero Project's research and at the Zero Project Conference. It is therefore my pleasure to announce that my daughter Isabella ESSL will take on the responsibilities of the Zero Project's Head of Inclusive Arts to drive these efforts in the future (see also back page of this report)

## Zero Project Austria

As a family foundation, we are also working on projects in our home country. Among many other activities to support inclusive education and employment, we organize the “5th Parliament Event” just before the Zero Project Conference. At this event, representatives of all political parties, innovators from across the world and from different types of organizations, meet in the prestigious – and easy-to-access – Austrian Parliament to present and advance solutions to remove barriers for all persons with disabilities to support implementation in Austria.

In closing, I want to say thank you from the bottom of my heart for the hard work done by the Zero Project Network and the Zero Project Team in the past year. I personally look forward to our joint projects and activities to improve the lives and legal rights of all persons with disabilities.

# “A partnership for a world with zero barriers!”

FOREWORD BY CATALINA SAIEH, PRESIDENT OF FUNDACIÓN DESCÚBREME



## **Inclusive education and ICTs**

Over the past five years the collaborative efforts of the Zero Project and Fundación Descúbreme have transcended geographical boundaries and laid the foundation for a profound transformation in fostering a world with zero barriers across Spanish-speaking nations. Despite the challenging global events that occurred during this period, our joint commitment has witnessed a remarkable increase in the involvement of Latin American countries in the Zero Project's various stages. This journey has been fundamental in developing a shared commitment and a growing understanding of addressing common regional challenges within the dynamic landscape of disability inclusion.

This report focuses on two topics – inclusive education and ICTs. Inclusive education is essential to true inclusion since it represents a fundamental right, allowing persons with disabilities to exercise other rights as they participate in various aspects of life. This year's research explores such critical themes as early childhood intervention and initial education. Their incorporation ensures that persons with disabilities have access to all the tools and resources they need from early on to live full, meaningful lives.

Along the same line, education in emergencies speaks directly to the challenges we are facing around the globe, be it armed conflicts, displacement, or natural disasters attributed to global warming. Education in such difficulties is not merely a response to challenges but a proactive stance to understand and mitigate the impact on persons with disabilities. Our responsibility is clear: to guarantee that, even in

the face of adversity, individuals with disabilities are not marginalized or left behind.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs), the second topic of this report, greatly define our contemporary world. While technology can empower persons with disabilities to lead more autonomous and independent lives, we must constantly remind ourselves that these are human-made tools, and if inclusion is not at the centre of technology development, these tools risk becoming biased and failing to provide the necessary support for those who need it most.

## **Zero Project Conference 2024 for Latin America and the Spanish-speaking community worldwide**

As many of you know, Fundación Descúbreme has had the pleasure of hosting four Zero Project Conferences for the Spanish-speaking community worldwide. However, due to the health crisis we could not host them in person, as we had wished. This is why we are especially delighted for the opportunity to do so in 2024. I want to extend a heartfelt invitation to all of you to join us in Santiago de Chile this May for the first-ever in-person Zero Project Conference for Latin American and Spanish-speaking countries worldwide. As we explore shared challenges around inclusive education and ICTs, we are committed to developing relevant, meaningful partnerships that will promote positive change for persons with disabilities in the region.

Please join us in building a world with 'zero barriers' for the full inclusion of persons with disabilities. The journey is collective, and your participation is critical in forging a future in which inclusion is both an aspiration and a lived reality for all.

# Executive Summary

## About Zero Project

The mission of the Essl Foundation and Zero Project

## Topic 2023–2024

About this year's research topics:  
Education and ICT

## Map and List A–Z

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Awardees

## Methodology

How the Awardees 2023–2024 have been  
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Themes and Solutions used by  
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## This year's selection

Facts and figures about this year's  
selection process

# About the Zero Project

## THE MISSION OF THE ESSL FOUNDATION AND THE ZERO PROJECT

The Zero Project's mission is to work towards a world with zero barriers by supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Worldwide, the Zero Project finds and shares solutions that improve the daily lives and legal rights of persons with disabilities.

### The Essl Foundation

In 2008 the *Essl Foundation MGE gemeinnützige Privatstiftung* – an Austrian charitable foundation that focuses on scientific research and charitable giving – initiated the Zero Project to identify, curate, and share inclusive solutions, as intended and encouraged by Article 32 of the CRPD.

The original impetus for what would later become the Zero Project occurred in 2008, when the Essl Foundation carried out a preliminary study on existing data related to persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups. Since then, it has evolved into what is now known as the Zero Project. A dedicated team developed the original idea into a renowned research-driven initiative that engages with more than 10,000 experts from around the world. Some 900 Zero Project Awardees have been identified to date: their solutions all share the key criteria of innovation, impact, and scalability to improve the lives and legal rights of persons with disabilities.

**Some 900 Innovative Solutions, all sharing the key criteria of innovation, impact, and scalability to improve the lives and legal rights of persons with disabilities.**

### An international team

The Zero Project is managed out of its headquarters at the *Haus der Philanthropie* in Vienna. An international team connects with representatives of all sectors of society, conducts research based on an annual theme, and organizes local as well as global events – such as the annual Zero Project Conference in the United Nations Office at Vienna.

Since 2018 the team of Fundación Descúbreme in

Chile has joined the Zero Project also in the nomination and selection process, focusing on the Spanish speaking communities.

### A global network

The Zero Project is proud of its global network of partners, experts, decision-makers, opinion leaders, and other changemakers. By fostering close collaboration among all parts of this vast network, the impact of proven solutions can be amplified and replicated elsewhere.

As of 2023, established partner organizations in Latin America – Fundación Descúbreme from Chile, in India – Youth4Jobs and Enable India, and Singapore – SG Enable, carry out regionalized activities, such as the Zero Project India Conference, to encourage the replication of the most relevant Zero Project Awardees' solutions.

### Finding and sharing solutions

All network activities are based on the Zero Project's unique research method, with its three pillars of (1) selecting solutions based on their innovation, impact, and potential to scale; (2) engaging with thousands of Zero Project Network members as part of the selection process; and (3) supporting the selected solutions in order to increase their impact.

Based on a reoccurring four-year cycle, the research concentrates on one of the following four themes each year: Employment, Education, Independent Living/Political Participation, and Accessibility. In 2023–2024 the research has been centred on Inclusive Education. Due to the increasing importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) this topic is addressed every year.

### Zero Project Database

Digitalization plays an important role in making proven solutions known, and in facilitating knowledge transfer internationally. The Zero Project Database is an accessible, public tool to allow anyone to conduct keyword-based searches in the Zero Project's vast database of some 900 proven solutions. It is available free of charge at [zeroproject.org](https://zeroproject.org).

# The Zero Project methodology

## A UNIQUE RESEARCH-DRIVEN APPROACH AND SOLUTIONS THAT ARE PROVEN TO WORK

The Zero Project has created a unique approach to identifying outstanding and innovative solutions. It does so by leveraging the knowledge of thousands of experts and organizations worldwide. The methodology also comprises the promotion of these solutions at the Zero Project Conference and many other ways.

As outlined in Article 32 of the CRPD, the “sharing and promotion of best practices” is important for the realization of the CRPD’s goals. The Zero Project’s methodology works to apply this principle on all levels – local, regional, and international – and with a cross-sectoral approach. The Zero Project engages with all types of stakeholders, from small OPDs (Organisations of Persons with Disabilities) working on the grassroots level to governments and multinational companies. Particularly, the Zero Project focuses on identifying the potential power of user-led organizations, of start-ups, of public institutions, of academics, of funding and investment entities, and of supranational organizations such as UN agencies or the European Union.

The Zero Project understands innovative solutions in a broad context, consequently applying its three selection criteria. As a result, the Zero Project is implementing a cross-sectoral approach, bringing together stakeholders from all groups of society who share the belief in the power of innovation and of collaboration, especially when breaking down silos and working across sectors and country borders.

### Importance of the network and criteria

The backbone of this methodology is the process of research, nomination, and selection, carried out between April and November every year. Using this methodology, the global Zero Project network collectively determines the selection, beginning with nominations and ending with selecting the Zero Project Awardees. The Zero Project team itself only provides a framework for this process. Apart from the network approach, the three selection criteria are crucial for the methodology: (1) innovation, (2) impact, and (3) scalability.

### Innovation

Any solution will have demonstrated an innovative and effective solution in support of removing barriers in one of the themes of the Zero Project’s research focus. The research takes into account the local context, geographies, and groups of users or beneficiaries.

### Impact

The impact of a particular solution could refer to the number of beneficiaries or people using a service, the solution’s growth rate, or the influence on improved public services, among others. Any selected solution must have been deployed and have already had an impact; the selection process does not consider projects or products at a concept stage.

### Scalability

All nominations are reviewed for their potential in replicating and expanding to new geographies or growing in another way that allows a maximum number of persons with disabilities to benefit from the innovation. Among the almost 900 solutions that have been selected since 2013, scalability has been indeed multifaceted, ranging from open-source applications to the replication of effective policies, to the expansion of inclusive start-up solutions to new countries.

### From finding to sharing solutions

The Zero Project actively shares the Awardees’ solutions, with the renowned Zero Project Conference and Publications among other communication channels.

In addition, the Zero Project partners with strategic organizations to amplify the Awardees’ impact through regional activities, targeted initiatives, and the development of technology-based tools.

#### THE FOUR SECTORS

1. Civil Society
2. Public Sector
3. Business Sector
4. ICT (across all sectors)

#### THE THREE CRITERIA

1. Innovation
2. Impact
3. Scalability

#### THE FIVE THEMES

1. Employment (2021; next in 2025)
2. Accessibility (2022; next in 2026)
3. Independent Living and Political Participation (2023; next in 2027)
4. Education (this year and 2028)
5. ICT (every year)



# About this year's research topic

## EDUCATION AND ICT IN THE CRPD

The main theme of the Zero Project Report 2024 is Education, which is covered by Article 24 of the CRPD, but also Article 27 (Employment) and Article 23 (Respect for Home and Family). The second theme of the Report – Information and Communication Technology (ICT) – is mainly covered by Article 9 (accessibility). This page explains how the Zero Project's research is anchored on the CRPD.

### Education

The Zero Project 2024 is focused on education as it is defined in [Article 24 of the CRPD](#). Article 24 specifically mentions, among others:

- (a) Persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, and that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from secondary education, on the basis of disability;*
- (b) Persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live;*
- (c) Reasonable accommodation of the individual's requirements is provided;*
- (d) Persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education;*
- (e) Effective individualized support measures are provided in environments that maximize academic and social development, consistent with the goal of full inclusion.*

Since many innovative solutions have identified gaps parallel to the formal education system as a major barrier for making inclusive education work, other Articles are also considered, particularly:

- transition models, starting as early as preschool age or connecting formal education to vocational education or even employment and lifelong learning, thereby creating a relationship to Articles 23 and 27;
- the training of teachers as well as parents and professionals relates to Article 27;
- non-formal education considers all methods to teach and train that do not employ the conventional textbook/classroom teaching setting, such as using sports, the arts, games, cartoons, or computer apps, relating to Article 9.

### ICT

[Article 9 of the CRPD](#) focuses on accessibility and mentions ICT specifically in section h:

*h) To promote the design, development, production and distribution of accessible information and communications technologies and systems at an early stage, so that these technologies and systems become accessible at minimum cost.*

Because of its importance and influence on all solutions, the Zero Project includes this theme in each call for nominations, on equal terms with the main research topic of the year.

### Arts

The Zero Project specifically asks for innovation solutions in the arts, related to [Article 30 of the CRPD](#).

### International cooperation

[Article 32 of the CRPD](#) recognizes the importance of international cooperation and its promotion.

International cooperation has to be inclusive and accessible, should be supported by technical and economic assistance, and should include the sharing of information, experiences, training programmes, and best practices.

The Zero Project has been initiated in this very spirit.

#### RESEARCH AREAS IN EDUCATION

- Formal Education
- Technical and Vocational Education (TVET)
- Pre-School and Early Childhood Intervention
- Non-formal Education
- Digital Learning
- Lifelong Learning
- Education in Emergencies

#### RESEARCH AREAS IN ICT

- Gaming Solutions
- Translation/Conversation Tools
- Orientation Systems
- Community and Knowledge Platforms
- Mobile Services and Smartphone Apps
- Artificial Intelligence/Big Data
- 3D Printing, Robotics
- Social Media

# Selecting this year's Awardees

## NOMINATION – PEER-REVIEW/SHORTLISTING – VOTING – FACTSHEETS/FINAL SELECTION

For 2023–2024 the Zero Project selected and awarded 77 solutions from 43 countries. In this section the nomination and selection processes are described in detail.

### Call for Nomination

Starting from early May and ending by early July, more than 10,000 experts from nearly every country in the world were approached to spread the Call for Nomination, and to nominate solutions in the area of inclusive education, and ICT. Nominations were accepted through the Zero Project nominations platform or via an accessible MS Word document.

By June 30, 2023, a record 523 nominations from 97 countries were received (the previous record was 475 nominations in 2020–2021).

### Zero Project Team pre-screening

In July the Zero Project Team – which included members of Fundación Descúbreme – began an internal screening process. The Zero Project Team looked at each nomination and decided whether it (1) addressed the annual topic, and whether (2) it demonstrated an already proven impact on the lives of persons with disabilities, and also principally met the other two criteria of innovation and scalability.

The Zero Project Team also identified missing elements within the nominations and asked the nominators further questions. Many nominators answered these questions, such as by providing data of users or other types of evidence, and this feedback was added to the nomination platform.

### Peer-review and Shortlist

Of those that were judged to fit all three criteria, a small number of nominations proceeded directly onto the Shortlist, with more identified as requiring further analysis and expertise.

These nominations went through a process called 'Shortlisting peer-review', organized by the Zero Project Team and joined by a diverse group of experts from the global Zero Project network. These experts were selected and invited based on their experience or lived experience with the innovations, in terms of geography, approach, and disability.

Seven peer-reviews were conducted, and in each five to eight nominations presented. A total of 50 experts joined in, both with and without disabilities. Each peer-reviewer was asked to rate each nomination based on innovation, impact, and scalability.

Using this methodology, a Shortlist of 164 nominations from 62 countries was compiled and published in August 2023.

### Second round peer-review, fact-checking

By end of August, a second round of peer-reviews commenced, using a similar methodology to rate the innovations from the Shortlist. By mid-September, approximately a third of all nominations had been selected, and a third had been rejected.

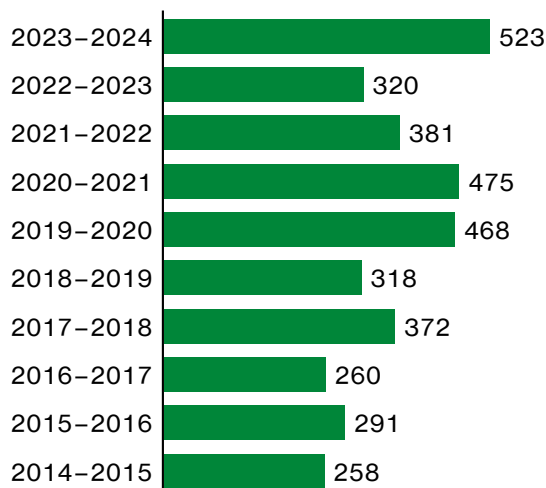
For the remaining group of approximately 50 nominations in the 'undecided middleground', a third round of Peer Review was introduced, called 'Fact-checking'. For those, the Zero Project Team went back to the nominators once again and asked questions that had been raised by the Peer Reviewers in previous rounds. With this additional information available, a trusted group of experts from the Zero Project again contributed with their expertise and ratings as peer reviewers.

Based on all expertise and ratings available, the Zero Project selected 79 nominations in October.

### Factsheets and final selection

In the final step of composing a Factsheet on each of the selected nominations, the Zero Project Team conducted more fact-checking and requested additional photos and videos to complete the dataset of each Awardee. This also is to ensure that Awardees are willing to share their expertise and to connect with the Zero Project Network. In the end, 77 nominations were selected to be Zero Project Awardees of 2023–2024.

### Total number of nominations since 2014



# Zero Project Scaling Solutions

ESSL FOUNDATION, FUNDACIÓN DESCÚBREME, ATOS, GIZ, AND INCLUSIVE CREATION

Zero Project Scaling Solutions is an exclusive programme for shortlisted ZeroCall Innovators to transfer and advance their outstanding solution for persons with disabilities to new countries and regions.

## Transferring solutions

The programme, formerly known as “Zero Project Impact Transfer,” was first initiated in 2018 by the ESSL Foundation, in collaboration with the global organization Ashoka. During that time the programme supported more than 60 innovations from 26 countries. Although replications typically happen in a medium-term perspective, one third of participants have successfully replicated their innovation within two years’ time.

In 2023 the programme was expanded and re-named Zero Project Scaling Solutions. It is implemented in partnership with Fundación Descúbreme from Chile, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the multinational IT company Atos, and Inclusive Creations, an IT consultancy firm based in Norway. The programme focuses on transferring and advancing outstanding innovations for persons with disabilities to new countries and regions.

## Scaling Fellows

This year, 12 carefully selected Scaling Fellows participated in the annual training programme, which provided several months of human resources and organizational development.

At the Zero Project Conference, the Zero Project Latin America Conference, and through activities facilitated by other strategic partners, these newly acquired skills were then used for networking to take important steps towards internationalizing innovation.

## Key components

### Scaling Support

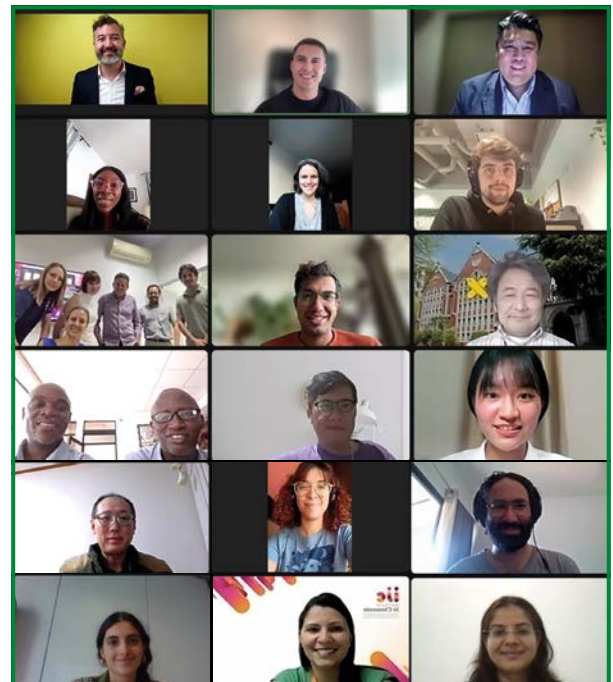
Tailored strategies and resources guide Scaling Fellows through the complex process of scaling to new countries and regions.

### Impact Measurement

Robust impact measurement strategies are applied to foster transformative change.

### Personal Advisors

Each Scaling Fellow is matched with a Personal Advisor to receive 1-on-1 expert guidance and strategic insights.



Screenshot from the first online meeting of this year’s Scaling Solution Fellows with the Zero Project and the team of Inclusive Creation. Part of the webinars of Scaling Solutions are also open to the general public and can be found on [zeroproject.org](http://zeroproject.org).

## SCALING FELLOWS 2023-2024

- ADED Appui au Development de L’enfant en Detresse (DRC)
- CSIR Institute of Microbial Technology (India)
- Hable One B.V. (Netherlands)
- IN Dashboard (Paraguay)
- Instituto de la Sordera: Colegio Intercultural Bilingüe (Chile)
- IRISBOND (Spain)
- Jô Clemente Institute (Brazil)
- Okayama Broadcasting Co (Japan)
- Reach & Match (Australia)
- Sensee World (United States)
- Save Our Needy Organisation (Nigeria)
- The VLibras Suite (Brazil)

# Emerging topics and trends in inclusive education and ICT

## FROM THE ARTS TO YOUTUBE, FROM AFRICA TO YOUTH SERVICES

The 77 Innovative Solutions of 2023–2024 present a variety of important themes, reflecting current trends in innovation. Find here a synthesis that the Zero Project has identified this year.

Finding patterns (trends, clusters) of solutions is a powerful tool to promote innovation and system change. Clusters of solutions that have been proven successful effectively demonstrate to opinion leaders and decision makers a clear path forward. Such trends can be used as guidance towards ever more promising future innovations. In this section, you find a list of those trends that emerged from analysis of the 77 Awardees this year.

### Emerging topics in Inclusive Education

#### Early childhood interventions tailored for low-income and rural settings

Innovative early intervention strategies in low-resource areas, from an Indian startup to an app

tackling malnutrition and inclusive school-readiness programmes.

#### Educational resources for visually impaired students

ICT for the visually impaired, from accessible devices in low-income areas to rapid Braille conversion of textbooks.

#### Educational and support strategies during humanitarian crises

Strategies for early childhood intervention, inclusive care, and resilient education to support refugees and internally displaced people with hearing loss and other disabilities.

#### Entrepreneurship and leadership development for young people with disabilities

Empowerment training by youth with disabilities, leadership mentoring, youth house services, self-employment support, and student-led innovation in inclusion.

### EMERGING TOPICS IN EDUCATION AT A GLANCE

- Early childhood interventions tailored for low-income and rural settings
- Educational and support strategies during humanitarian crises
- Educational resources for visually impaired students
- Entrepreneurship and leadership development for young people with disabilities
- Focus on sub-Saharan Africa: Comprehensive teaching frameworks
- Inclusive practices in universities and higher education institutions
- Inclusive programs in arts, dance, and music for youth
- Integration strategies for mainstream schools and youth services
- Methods for teaching sign language and fostering signing communities
- Universally applicable early childhood interventions

### EMERGING TOPICS IN ICT AT A GLANCE

- Disseminating affordable educational programmes and technology
- Free resources to increase web accessibility
- High-tech solutions expanding to global markets
- Innovative tech solutions enhancing sign language communication
- Leveraging social media, gaming, radio, and YouTube for education, networking, and employment
- Training in IT skills and job creation in the context of higher-income countries

### **Focus on sub-Saharan Africa: Comprehensive teaching frameworks**

Empowering children with disabilities in remote areas, with low-cost and easy-to-adapt programme modules and IT support.

### **Inclusive practices in universities and higher education institutions**

Enhancing university inclusion in this Session, such as integrated disability education for medical students, collections of good practices for African universities, and deaf leadership.

### **Inclusive programmes in arts, dance, and music for youth**

Inclusive arts education, sign language youth choirs, and dance for disability awareness.

### **Integration strategies for mainstream schools and youth services**

Methods working on vocational inclusion, modular teacher training, integrated classroom support, after-school support, and community-driven accessibility measures.

### **Methods for teaching sign language and fostering signing communities**

Building up signing communities, be it family sign language training in the Amazon, schools pioneering bilingual deaf education, or ICT innovators developing a global sign language app.

### **Universally applicable early childhood interventions**

Inclusive early child interventions, like a video guidance, an inclusive kindergarten, customized Down syndrome support, tactile play kits, and a cross-ministry coordination policy.

### **Emerging topics in inclusive and accessible ICT**

#### **Disseminating affordable educational programmes and technology**

Scaling the enrollment of children with disabilities, facilitate low-cost therapy and education for remote children, provide accessible learning models, and develop UNICEF-backed technology-rollouts.

#### **Free resources to increase web accessibility**

Free tools supporting web accessibility, such as a support feature for colour blindness and open-source solutions for cross-disability computer access.

#### **High-tech solutions expanding to global markets**

Smartphone aids for the blind, a global AI call-to-text

### **SEARCH FOR TOPICS AND MORE IN THE ZERO PROJECT DATABASE!**

The solutions and themes discussed here are also the foundation for the organization of the sessions at the Zero Project Conference 2024. These are only the broadest of themes that emerged during the intense research, voting, and selection process of deciding the Zero Project Awardees 2023–2024. To find out more in detail about the solutions discussed here, as well as all Zero Project Awardees past and present, please visit the Zero Project Database at [www.zeroproject.org](http://www.zeroproject.org), where you can find and search Factsheets of approximately 900 solutions.

app, an eye-tracking communication device, and quality 3D-printed prosthetics.

#### **Innovative tech solutions enhancing sign language communication**

A free sign language app, sign language in science, a TV sign language sports academy, and digital sign books.

#### **Leveraging social media, gaming, radio, and YouTube**

Training skills via Lego robotics, social media for parental support, IT gamification, anti-violence apps, and IT jobs for the visually impaired.

#### **Training in IT skills and job creation in the context of higher-income countries**

Vocational IT training for inclusivity, digital employability for students with disabilities, and online courses for professional growth.

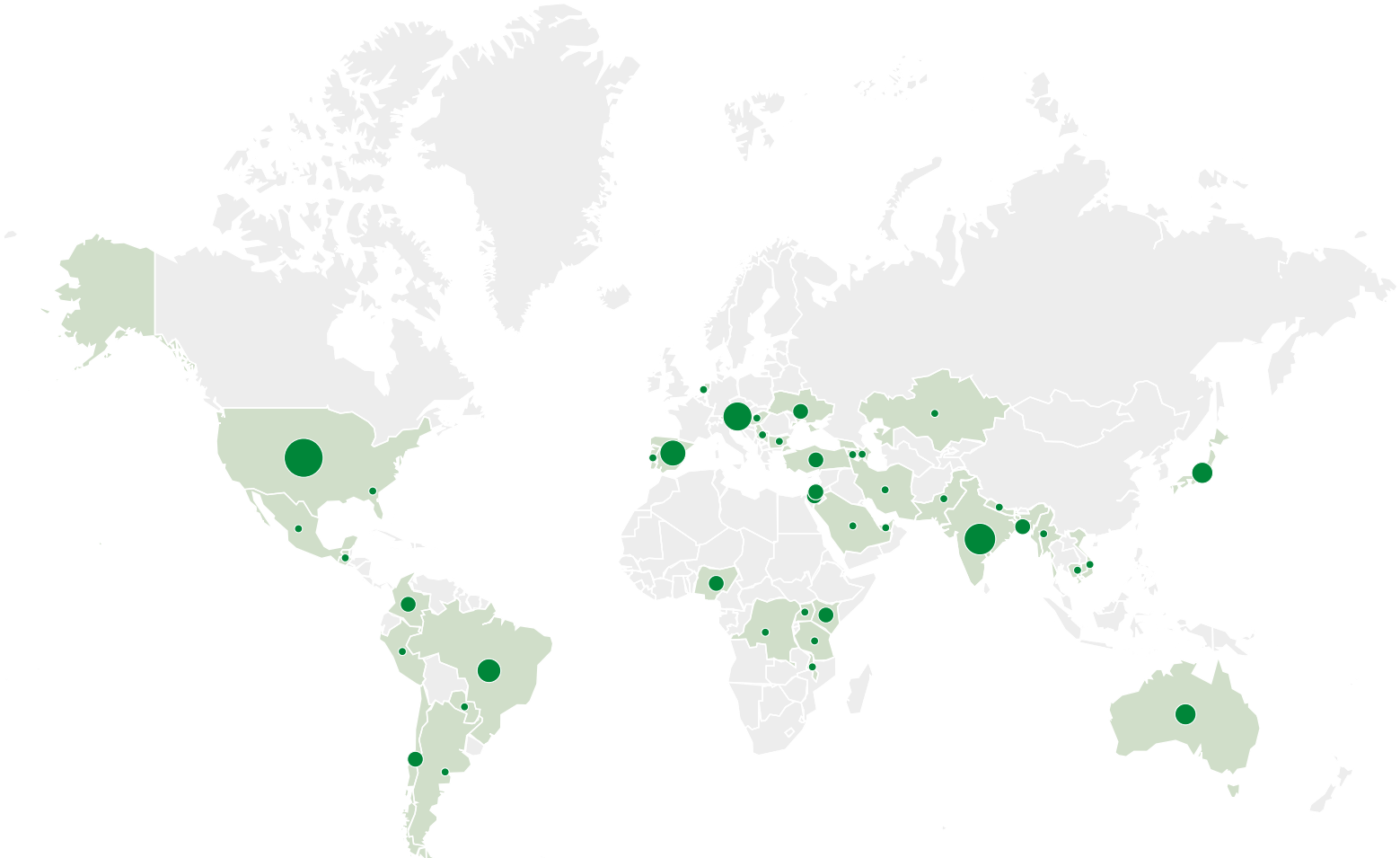
### **TOPICS AND SOLUTIONS WILL BE SEEN AT THE ZERO PROJECT CONFERENCE 2024**

ZeroCon sessions offer each Awardee the opportunity to present their solution in the context of those similar, leading to conversations, partnership, and greater innovations during the Conference. You will find all the presentations of this year's Awardees on the Zero Project YouTube Channel, where the Conference is livestreamed and all sessions are then available for on-demand viewing.

# Worldmap of the 77 Awardees

ALL SELECTED INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS 2023–2024, PER ITS COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Worldmap and list of all the Awardees 2023–2024. Factsheets in this Report are also sorted by country name from A to Z, starting from page 14.



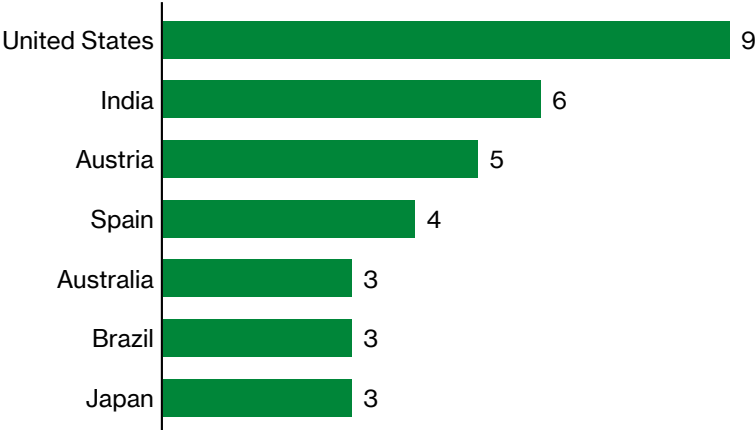
Number of Awardees 2023–2024

77

Number of countries

43

Countries with 3 Awardees or more





## All Awardees country by country, from A to Z

● Business Sector 
 ● Civil Society 
 ● Public Sector 
 ● ICT 
 ■ also selected for Zero Project Scaling Solutions

Country of Origin	Headline of the Factsheet	Organization/ Solution	Sector
Argentina	Low-cost provision of therapeutical and pedagogical services to children in remote areas	Escuelita Ambulante	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Armenia	Combining pedagogical and psychological support services in inclusive classrooms	Bridge of Hope	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Australia	A mentoring programme for more people with disabilities on company boards	Australian Network on Disability	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Australia	A tactile inclusive play kit supporting the development of all children	Reach & Match	<span style="color: blue;">●</span> <span style="color: green;">■</span>
Australia	A training organized by young people with disabilities to empower community workers	Youth Disability Advocacy Service	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Austria	Making African universities more disability-inclusive with a free web-based toolbox	Light for the World	<span style="color: purple;">●</span>
Austria	Inclusion of developmental disabilities into the medical curriculum of future doctors	Johannes Kepler University	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Austria	A start-up app that reaches more than 1.3 million sign language learners worldwide	Lingvano	<span style="color: purple;">●</span>
Austria	A high school prioritizing the admission of students with disabilities	Schulzentrum Ungargasse	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Austria	Special support for deaf and hard of hearing refugees	Hospital St. John of God Linz	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Azerbaijan	E-government automatically transferring disability benefits without any bureaucracy	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population	<span style="color: orange;">●</span>
Bangladesh	A community-driven and low-cost school system for children in rural areas	DRRA	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Belgium	Emergency early childhood intervention supporting over 12,000 Ukrainian refugees	EASPD and partners	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Belgium	Local 3D production of high-quality, low-cost prosthetics in low-income countries	Ugani Prosthetics	<span style="color: purple;">●</span>
Brazil	Free sign language translation application in Portuguese with millions of monthly translations	Federal University of Paraíba	<span style="color: purple;">●</span> <span style="color: green;">■</span>
Brazil	After-school programme for children with intellectual disabilities to attend mainstream classes	Instituto Jô Clemente	<span style="color: red;">●</span> <span style="color: green;">■</span>
Brazil	Training course for teachers on how to use the arts to make their education practices inclusive	Mais Diferenças	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Cambodia	Inclusive education and vocational training in remote rural areas of South-East Asia	DDSP	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Chile	Early stimulation programme for children with Down Syndrome in an academic setting	Pontificia Universidad Católica	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Chile	A school offering free high-quality bilingual education for deaf children	Instituto de la Sordera (Indesor)	<span style="color: red;">●</span> <span style="color: green;">■</span>
Colombia	LEGO robotics workshops improve team work and self-confidence of children with disabilities	Fundación Biosbot Robótica	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Colombia	A school educating a majority of deaf students with a minority of hearing students	Fundación ICAL	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
DRC Congo	Inclusive education programme for children with disabilities in sub-Saharan Africa	Appui au Développement de l'Enfant en Détresse (ADED)	<span style="color: red;">●</span> <span style="color: green;">■</span>
Georgia	Social media platform for parents expanded to in-person support and educational events	McLain Association for Children Georgia (MAC Georgia)	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Germany	Ensure inclusive early childhood care and education in refugee camps and emergencies	CBM – Kenya Country Office	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Guatemala	Empowering inclusive education with ICT integration	ADISA	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Hungary	A Youth House empowering vulnerable young people with and without disabilities	Salva Vita Foundation	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
India	School-readiness programmes piloting mainstream inclusive education	Fourth Wave Foundation	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
India	Government research institute promoting sign language for STEM content	CSIR – IMTECH	<span style="color: red;">●</span> <span style="color: green;">■</span>
India	Mainstreaming a self-employment programme India-wide with government-led institutes	EnAble India	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
India	Indian start-up company offering paid early childhood intervention as in-house services	LoveForLife Rehabilitation Services	<span style="color: blue;">●</span>
India	Concerted effort promoting ICT devices for children with disabilities in low-income contexts	Sightsavers India	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
India	Pre-incubator supporting social innovation and entrepreneurship in assistive technology	Tata Consultancy Services Foundation	<span style="color: blue;">●</span>
Iran	A 10-year plan for a metropolitan city making 10,000 km of sideways accessible	Omran Zaveh Engineering Consultants	<span style="color: purple;">●</span>
Israel	Video-based guidance for parents/caregivers for better inclusion of children with disabilities	Israel Elwyn with Bar Ilan University	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Israel	Making mainstream kindergartens more disability inclusive	Krembo Wings	<span style="color: red;">●</span>
Japan	A replicable model of an inclusive youth choir making music incorporating sign language	El Sistema Connect	<span style="color: red;">●</span>

Country of Origin	Headline of the Factsheet	Organization/ Solution	Sector
Japan	TV station organizing a sign language academy for interpreters specializing in sports coverage	Okayama Broadcasting (OHK)	 
Japan	Freely and globally available software supporting users who are colour blind	Ryobi Systems Co., Ltd.	
Kazakhstan	Using gamification and mass events to train young people with disabilities in IT skills	ITeachMe	
Kenya	Access to inclusive education for the equitable employment of youth with visual impairments	Kilimanjaro Blind Trust Africa	
Malawi	International NGO using digital books with sign language and audio for all children	World Vision Malawi with Malawi National Association of the Deaf	
Mexico	An app and a movement to combat gender-based violence against women with disabilities	Centro Interdisciplinario de Derechos, Infancia y Parentalidad A.C.	
Myanmar	Building a tech infrastructure, training, and IT job creation for persons with visual impairments	Living Dignity for the Blind	
Nepal	Provincial government and a foundation creating large-scale enrolment of pupils with disabilities	Karuna Foundation Nepal with Provincial Government of Koshi	
Netherlands	Enhancing smartphone and tablet accessibility for individuals with visual impairments	Hable One B.V.	 
Nigeria	Transitional learning centres in rural and displaced settings for youth with disabilities	Maple Leaf Early Years Foundation	
Nigeria	Comprehensive ICT skills empowerment programme for disadvantaged women and girls	Save Our Needy Organization	 
Pakistan	Two programmes enabling young children with Down Syndrome to attend mainstream schools	Karachi Down Syndrome Programme	
Palestine	Crisis-resilient education for children with disabilities in Palestine	ASDC with CBM	
Palestine	Providing hearing and seeing aids paired with inclusive education in refugee camps	PCCDS	
Paraguay	An online tool for country accountability on human rights and disability inclusion	Fundacion Saraki	 
Peru	Training family groups in remote Amazon villages to use sign language and to replicate it	Asociación Ministerio Diaconal Paz y Esperanza	
Portugal	A case manager coordinating early intervention support from three ministries	Cooperative for Inclusion (CECD)	
Saudi Arabia	Inclusion of deaf students in higher education	King Abdulaziz University	
Spain	Company- and volunteer-based vocational training model for creating inclusive ICT jobs	Fundación GoodJob	
Spain	A programme to improve employability of people with disabilities in the digital sector	Fundación ONCE	
Spain	Eye-tracking device for persons with severe disabilities enabling them to communicate	IRISBOND	 
Spain	European university alliance fostering inclusion by sharing tools and good practices	University of Barcelona together with partner universities	
Switzerland	UNICEF-based technology project supporting young people with communication impairments	UNICEF	
Tanzania	Empowering youth through storytelling and digital media in sub-Saharan Africa	Tai Tanzania	
Turkey	Training students to become leaders and innovators in accessibility and inclusion	Değiştiren Adımlar Derneği (DADER)	
Turkey	Accessible education systems with audio and tactile inclusive materials	Bergama Municipality Rahmi Yesilsoy Disabled Centre	
Ukraine	Creating online-courses to support disabled people's professional development	CSR Ukraine	
Ukraine	A government e-system making services to persons with disabilities available by smartphone	Ministry of Social Policy	
UAE	Vocational training for young people with intellectual disabilities in the Arab region	SEDRA Foundation	
United Kingdom	Including regional DPOs in internationally funded development programmes	Sightsavers with IDA	
United States	Cultivating deaf leadership and global advocates from China to the United States	St. Cloud State University	
United States	A professional dance company educating youth about disability inclusion in mainstream schools	Infinite Flow Dance	
United States	An AI-based smartphone app translating conversations into text messages in real time	Nagish	
United States	Fast-growing, easy-to-replicate methodology to evaluate and improve inclusion in schools	Perkins School for the Blind	
United States	A free open-source tool for increasing cross-disability accessibility of computers	Raising the Floor	
United States	Technology converting complex textbooks into Braille within hours	Sensee	 
United States	Fostering inclusive education in Latin America through youth leadership and sports	Special Olympics Latin America	
United States	Using an app, training, and advocacy to fight malnutrition among children with disabilities	SPOON	
United States	UNICEF's accessible digital textbooks for children with and without disabilities	UNICEF	
Viet Nam	Making mainstream schools more inclusive by using an easy-to-share module to train teachers	Research Centre for Inclusion (RCI)	



# The Awardees

## 77 Factsheets

All Factsheets about the Awardees  
2023/24, listed by country A–Z

## 16 Life Stories

Persons with disabilities or their peers  
explain how Zero Project Awardees have  
changed their lives

# Low-cost provision of therapeutic and pedagogical services to children in remote areas

## ARGENTINA / ESCUELITA AMBULANTE – CAMINOS DE TIZA

Caminos de Tiza, run by the Argentine NGO Escuelita Ambulante, delivers therapeutic and educational support to disabled individuals in isolated areas along the Argentina/Brazil/Paraguay border. This programme emphasizes early neurodevelopmental disorder detection and assistive device provision, focusing on underserved indigenous communities. Entirely funded by donations and in-kind support, Caminos de Tiza reached 14 communities and 365 children in 2023, and has trained some 10,000 teachers from 2014 to 2023.

### Problem targeted

In countries with extremely remote regions and for indigenous communities there is a lack of therapeutic, pedagogical, and educational services for children with disabilities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Escuelita Ambulante's Caminos de Tiza, utilizing a mobile bus, offers therapeutic and educational services to children and youth with disabilities in remote rural areas of the Argentina, Brazil, and Paraguay border region, focusing on indigenous communities.

The programme integrates various educational methods, including rural, special, and intercultural bilingual education, in four languages: Guarani, Spanish, Portuguese, and sign language. Its curriculum covers literacy, hygiene, primary care, sexual health, orthopaedics, assistive technologies, and early intervention.

Caminos de Tiza also trains parents, caregivers, and teachers in recognizing neurodevelopmental disorders and maintaining therapeutic orthopaedic equipment. The project emphasizes stress reduction, sensory saturation management, cognitive accessibility, and medical methods. It also addresses autonomy and primary health care aspects, such as the use of nasogastric tubes, catheters, and dental hygiene.

Founded by two volunteers with disabilities, the programme educates families on handling disabilities,



Caminos de Tiza brings therapeutic and educational support to remote areas.

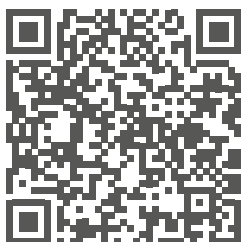
providing resources and materials for continuous therapeutic/pedagogical support.

Staffed by volunteers without external funding, Caminos de Tiza ensures service quality through public accountability, academic contributions, and community-based management.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Escuelita Ambulante Caminos de Tiza operates independently without significant funding or public sector support. The organization primarily leverages social networks to attract sponsors and benefactors, securing donations including food, therapeutic, orthopaedic, educational, and pharmacological supplies.

Notably, Caminos de Tiza takes pride in its autonomy from government assistance.



“Our intervention model has inspired public policies and is taken as a reference by foundations and NGOs.”

Julio Pereyra, Professor,  
Caminos de Tiza School



**Julio Pereyra**

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2014

- The project re-integrated over 700 children with disabilities into the education system between 2014 and 2023.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# Combining pedagogical and psychological support services in inclusive classrooms

## ARMENIA / BRIDGE OF HOPE – PEDAGOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

In 2017, Bridge of Hope, a large Armenian service provider, initiated a project providing pedagogical and psychological support services for children with disabilities within 135 mainstream schools and kindergartens in Armenia’s Tavush Marz province. Individualized support of children, intensive teacher training, and the usage of assistive technologies are all part of the programme. By 2022, 550 children with disabilities were enrolled, which has influenced public policies in Armenia towards more inclusive legislation in education.

### Problem targeted

Limited access to mainstream schools and education curricula is a major challenge in Armenia, as is the failure to create inclusive educational environments in schools.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Bridge of Hope is providing pedagogical and psychological support (PPS) services to preschools, secondary schools, and vocational schools in the Armenian province of Tavush Marz. It offers individualized support to children with disabilities, starting with an assessment of every child’s unique requirements, parental engagement, and community sensitization.

The PPS model works with all types of disabilities, such as intellectual and learning disabilities (approximately half of the children), and high percentages also with autism, visual impairments, speech/language impairments, and physical and psychosocial disabilities. Usually, there are three to five children with disabilities in each classroom. Teacher training is also offered, as are assistive technologies, including devices tailored to individual disabilities.

By 2023 the project was implemented in 53 preschools, 82 secondary schools, and 6 vocational schools, with approximately 550 children with disabilities as beneficiaries.

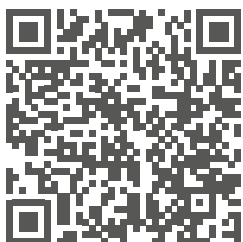


Bridge of Hope supports children with disabilities within regular schools and kindergartens.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

In its first stage, the project was supported by the Danish organization Mission East and the Danish Government. It has since been rolled out across the province of Tavush Marz and is now funded by the Armenian Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport, with approximately \$417,000 per year.

The project has already had a significant impact on policy and practice changes in preschool and secondary education throughout Armenia. Its model has been used in the entire mainstream education system of Armenia. This expansion also includes the transformation of special schools into PPS centres for inclusive schools. In its next stage, 2024 to 2027, disability inclusion will be promoted with the vocational education and training system of Armenia.



“Supporting the child to learn, succeed, and enjoy the sense of belonging to a group is the most rewarding part of our work.”

Armine Nersisyan, Director,  
Ijevan Community-based  
Centre, Bridge of Hope



Susanna Tadevosyan

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2017

- By 2023, 53 preschools, 82 secondary schools, and 6 vocational schools of Tavush Marz have benefited from the project.
- Some 2,500 teachers at these schools are trained in inclusive education.
- A project of Civil Society.

# A mentoring programme for more people with disabilities on company boards

## AUSTRALIA / AUSTRALIAN NETWORK ON DISABILITY – DIRECTING CHANGE SCHOLARSHIP

The Australian Network on Disability, a national employer-led NGO, launched the Directing Change Scholarship, a three-year educational programme that creates a unique pathway for persons with disabilities in Australia to join company boards. The programme works in two key ways: (1) by preparing persons with disabilities for directors' jobs; and (2) by making directors and boards more disability-confident – for example, by developing a toolkit that helps directors to foster accessibility. In its first year (2022), the project received 226 applications, awarded 22 scholarships, and engaged with over 300 company directors.

### Problem targeted

The low representation of persons with disabilities on company boards is mainly due to a lack of relevant qualifications as well as a lack of awareness.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Directing Change Scholarship is designed to support persons with disabilities who are in leadership roles, report to a board, or want to be on a board. The eight-month tailored mentoring programme matches participants with experienced board members, which has a twofold impact:

- the participants receive practical and relevant guidance and create new networks; and
- the director (i.e., the company mentor) is exposed to the challenges and barriers that persons with disabilities face in regards to joining a company board.

One aspect of the project is the development of a comprehensive toolkit for directors, offering practical guidance on fostering accessibility within boardrooms. Additionally, a series of briefings about disability inclusion on boards has been implemented. By partnering with the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), the Directing Change Scholarship creates a pathway and pipeline for people with disabilities to join boards. In addition, the programme raises awareness in the director network about the untapped talent they may be overlooking.



The Directing Change Scholarship prepares people with disabilities for leadership roles and makes board members more disability-confident.

As a result, AICD has seen an increase in the number of people who self-identify as having a disability enrolling in their programmes and requesting adjustments to participate.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The Directing Change Scholarship is fully funded by an Anonymous Trust. The project will spend 555,886 AUD (approximately US\$367,000) over a three-year period. This money will provide financial support for 57 people with disabilities to participate in the programme.

The AICD has also received a grant from the Commonwealth Government to make its educational content more accessible.



A comprehensive toolkit for directors offers practical guidance on fostering accessibility within boardrooms.



Sharon Kumar

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2022

- 37 directors have served as Mentors to these scholars and taken these learnings back to their boards.
- Over 300 directors have attended Director Briefings in Year 1 of the practice.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# A tactile inclusive play kit supporting the development of all children

## AUSTRALIA / REACH & MATCH – INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Reach & Match, an Australian-based social enterprise, offers an inclusive play-based learning programme for all children. Their distinctive learning kit comprises sensory mats and Braille/print alphabet tiles with sound features. Easily arranged in versatile 2D and 3D configurations, these mats enrich the learning process. From its beginnings until 2024, the programme – with its comprehensive activity manual and educational training – has been used by 35,000 children in eight countries, receiving numerous awards and forming partnerships with World Vision, UNICEF, and other organizations.

### Problem targeted

Many children with disabilities lack the inclusive and accessible educational tools for school readiness and mainstream early childhood education integration.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Reach & Match offers an innovative educational system that empowers children of all abilities, mostly at preschool and early primary age. The programme's core is the Reach & Match Learning Kit, a tactile tool with sensory mats with Braille/print alphabet tiles and distinct sounds. Over thirty adaptable learning activities target various skills, from literacy to social interaction.

The comprehensive educator training programme equips teachers with inclusive pedagogical techniques. Evaluation tools, developed in collaboration with educators, monitor the programme's effectiveness. Its impact includes improved learning outcomes, increased school readiness, and the empowerment of educators. Success rates are constantly monitored and evaluated.

Since its launch in 2014, Reach & Match has expanded to eight countries, benefiting over 35,000 children. The programme has won numerous awards, has been presented at many exhibitions, and partners with organizations such as UNICEF, Save the



Reach & Match's Learning Kit is an inclusive play-based learning programme for all children.

Children, World Vision, and Plan International, thus magnifying its global footprint.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Reach & Match operates as a for-profit social enterprise, with revenues from selling learning kits and training programmes. Goals include growing its user base by 30,000 over the next 3–5 years. The profits are reinvested to develop more inclusive educational resources.



“As a teacher with vision impairment, I feel very empowered and confident after receiving the Reach & Match training.”

Desmond Bang, Teacher of Visually Impaired, Inclusive Education Resource Centre, Papua New Guinea



Mandy Lau

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2014

- From 2021 to 2023 approximately 6,000 children in developed countries started using Reach & Match, based on collaborations with World Vision Thailand and UNICEF.
- A project of the Business Sector.



# A training organized by young people with disabilities to empower community workers

## AUSTRALIA / YDAS – TOGETHER: ACCESS & INCLUSION TRAINING

Together: Access & Inclusion Training – setup by Youth Disability Advocacy Service (YDAS), a local Australian NGO based in the state of Victoria – is an online and in-person accessible training programme for individuals and organizations working with young people. It is entirely designed and delivered by people with disabilities and centred around storytelling and lived experience. Between 2018 and 2023 the project has grown substantially, and currently has 1,647 participants.

### Problem targeted

Organizations and individuals who work with young people usually do not have the skills, knowledge, or understanding that they need to make their practice accessible and inclusive in ways that affirm the lived experience and identities of disabled young people.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Together Training is designed to equip persons and organizations working with young people to be more accessible and inclusive for disabled young people. This includes those who are working in local government youth services, with homelessness, with alcohol and drugs issues, with the LGBTIQ+ community, etc.

Usually, the expertise of these youth workers is limited when it comes to the specific needs of disabled young people. YDAS's Together Training is entirely led, managed, designed, and delivered by disabled people – meaning that lived experience and storytelling is part of every element of the training.

In 2021 seven new disabled staff members, including five as young co-designers and facilitators as well as a programme officer and programme manager, were hired to re-design and deliver Together Training from 2021 to 2024. Disabled people identified the need, applied for the grants, and were hired to design and deliver Together Training. By embracing accessibility and best practices, participants experience



Together: Access & Inclusion Training is designed and delivered by people with disabilities.

what genuine access and inclusion can look like, from both the shared content and the 'leading by example' delivery.

In 2022 and 2023, 40 free sessions along with 75 sessions that were paid for by clients from across Australia were organized. In addition, from mid-2021 to mid-2023, 35,000+ people accessed Together's online resources about access and inclusion.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The programme was setup and funded (annual cost of US\$236,000 in 2020) with grants from two governmental agencies.



“As a disabled facilitator, I've learned so much from my co-facilitators and participants within the training about what access and inclusion is.”

Bridget Jolley, Together Training Facilitator, YDAS

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- Survey data shows that participants (youth workers) have gone on to improve the services for more than 10,000 young people with disabilities.
- Approximately 70 per cent of attendees are women and 11 per cent men, with the rest accounted as non-binary sexes, such as transgender women or men, or “Another Gender.”
- A project of Civil Society.

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# Making African universities more disability-inclusive with a free web-based toolbox

AUSTRIA – AFRICA / LIGHT FOR THE WORLD – CAPABLE

Light for the World, an international NGO based in Austria, developed CapAble, a website that provides universities and other learning institutes with tools and other resources for disability inclusion in higher education. The website was built specifically for an African context, but it can be used in any country. Resources include an assistive technology hub, an e-course, and even a printable board game. Originally developed to support the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program in several African countries, between 2021 and 2023 it gained over 30,000 users with 240,000 page views.

## Problem targeted

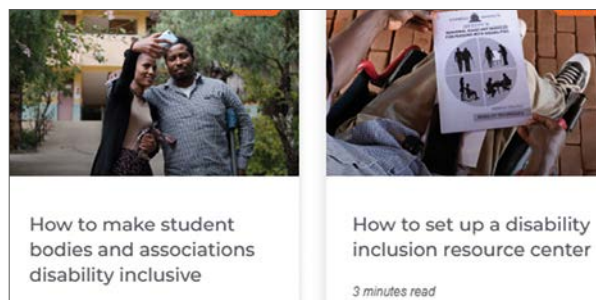
Programmes supporting universities to become disability-inclusive are mainly centred around the experiences and realities of high-income countries.

## Solution, innovation, and impact

Light for the World, the Austrian-based international development NGO, has launched a web-based toolbox to support universities and other learning institutes across Africa in becoming more inclusive for students with disabilities.

The CapAble platform provides practical tools and resources tailored specifically for the African context, and is available in English and French on a fully accessible website. It features an e-course, the CapAble awareness game, and an animated video series on mental health. An assistive technology hub, geared towards helping universities to find the right assistive technology to meet the needs of students, was developed under the leadership of an expert in the field who has a visual impairment. The site's audio-visual materials offer a participatory approach, allowing students with disabilities to share their narratives in a way that makes them feel proud.

Being funded by the Mastercard Foundation, CapAble was first targeted towards Mastercard Foundation Scholars a group of young people from Africa groomed to be future leaders and trained in becoming more disability inclusive. Over time the focus shifted,



CapAble provides tools and other resources for disability inclusion in higher education.

and as of 2023 the tool not only supports universities and learning institutes in Africa but outside the African context as well.

## Outlook, transferability, and funding

The CapAble platform was initially funded through the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program. In 2023 it was funded under a new programme called We Can Work, implemented by Light For the World, the African Disability Forum, and organizations of persons with disabilities in the seven programme countries.

The programme continues to be co-funded by the Mastercard Foundation, and further expansion of the programme is planned.

CapAble's open-access approach is easily replicable. For instance, it has been implemented in a programme funded by the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development with a similar platform for developing inclusive rural economies.



“CapAble guides us in making strategies and educational materials accessible to all learners.”

Dr. Molalign Belay, Co-Director, Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program at the University of Gondar



Erika Bojarczuk

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## FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2021

- In 2023, CapAble was available in Argentina, Australia, Ethiopia, India, the United States, and the United Kingdom.
- A project related to ICT.

# Inclusion of developmental disabilities into the medical curriculum of future doctors

## AUSTRIA / JOHANNES KEPLER UNIVERSITY – DEVELOPMENTAL MEDICINE

The Johannes Kepler University, based in Linz, Austria, has designed a curriculum of developmental medicine to train future doctors in the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. Modules such as developmental medicine and determining developmental profiles ensure that doctors have the skillset to provide adequate medical support to persons with disabilities. Between 2014 and 2022 all 600 medical students of the faculty have been taught this new curriculum.

### Problem targeted

In the conventional medical curricula for future doctors the special health care needs of persons with disabilities is not adequately reflected.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Since 2014 the medical faculty at Johannes Kepler University Linz has considered the individual needs of persons with disabilities in its curriculum.

At the start of a student's medical studies, ethics coursework emphasizes the dignity and rights of persons with disabilities. Those directly affected are actively involved in the courses so as to emphasize the importance of participation and its prerequisites.

Courses and lectures in paediatrics, neurology, psychiatry, and otorhinolaryngology (ears, nose, and throat) address the situations of individuals with various developmental disabilities, analysing their medical and psychosocial needs. The role of parents and relatives is taken into consideration as well. Interested students can opt for the non-mandatory subject called developmental medicine during their final year of study, allowing them to enter deeper into multi-professional work with individuals with developmental disabilities.

Starting in 2022 a sign language course for medical students has been offered, for which there is considerably more interest than spots available. This



Johannes Kepler University trains future doctors for the needs of persons with disabilities.

curriculum equips future doctors with the necessary skills to interact effectively with individuals who have developmental disabilities, benefiting the individuals themselves, their caregivers, and their families.


### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Johannes Kepler University is publicly funded, and tuition fees are compulsory at all Austrian universities. Within the designated duration of studies plus two tolerance semesters, EU or EEA citizens are exempt from tuition fees. The university plans to further expand and broaden the curriculum, including developmental medicine.



“It is gratifying to see the great interest shown by students.”

Priv.-Doz. Johannes Fellingner, Medical Faculty, Johannes Kepler University

 Johannes Fellingner  
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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2014

- In 2022 and 2023, 40 students attended the compulsory elective subject *developmental medicine*.
- A project of Civil Society.



# A start-up app that reaches more than 1.3 million sign language learners worldwide

## AUSTRIA / LINGVANO – LINGVANO APP

Lingvano is an Austrian start-up founded in 2018 that develops a mobile app to learn sign languages remotely. The engaging courses teach American, Austrian, and British Sign Language through instructional videos, quizzes, and features such as a mirror tool or a dictionary. Self-funded by the income from a subscription model, Lingvano aims to constantly increase quality and user numbers, and it plans to include other sign languages going forward. Between 2018 and 2023, Lingvano reached more than 1.3 million users globally.

### Problem targeted

Deaf and hard of hearing persons often experience exclusion due to the widespread lack of sign language knowledge among the general public.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Lingvano consists of an international team with varying hearing statuses, but all sign language instructors are deaf native signers. Nonetheless, there is no communication gap as all employees know or learn how to sign. They have developed their own unique teaching methods, which are offered in the form of a smartphone app.

The Lingvano App allows users to build sign language skills at their own pace through video lessons, vocabulary quizzes, and lookup tools. It adapts content to each sign language offered, considering individual grammar, signs, and regional peculiarities. Signing can be checked with the mirror feature, which enables the learners to watch their own movements and to correct them if necessary. Moreover, curriculum quality assurance is provided by deaf experts who provide inclusive instructions.

In 2023, Lingvano launched a B2B programme targeting professionals in health, education, customer service, and tourism sectors to enhance their communication skills. Between 2018 and 2023 the user count for Austrian Sign Language grew from 170 to



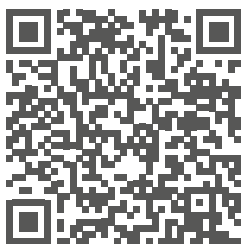
The start-up company Lingvano created an app for learning various sign languages remotely.

10,000. American Sign Language was introduced in 2020 and has expanded from 53,000 that year to 1.06 million in October 2023. British Sign Language followed suit in the spring of 2022 and reached 81,400 users by the end of the year.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Lingvano is self-funded through user subscriptions, with no external investors or advertorial revenues at this time. It is in the process of expanding its B2B services for institutions and companies, and is hiring more deaf professionals to deal with increased demand.

Lingvano's standardization allows for expansion into new sign languages while being able to cater to local needs.



“My daughter is dating a deaf person whom we adore and want to communicate with.”

Tori, a Lingvano user



Johanna Steiner

johanna.steiner@lingvano.com – business.lingvano.com

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- Between 2018 and 2023 the app has gained more than 1.3 million users, offering courses in American, Austrian, and British Sign Language.
- A project related to ICT.

# A high school prioritizing the admission of students with disabilities

## AUSTRIA / SCHULZENTRUM UNGARGASSE – REVERSE INTEGRATION POLICY

Schulzentrum Ungargasse (SZU) is a technical high school located in Vienna. The school prioritizes the admission of students with physical and sensory disabilities and provides them with the necessary support to participate in the lessons, such as free assistive devices and support teachers. The school provides barrier-free architecture and boarding facilities. In 2023 the school had 1,200 students, 30 per cent with disabilities. SZU is a Model United Nations partner, a UNESCO school, and a European Youth Parliament partner.

### Problem targeted

Many high schools do not or cannot address the special needs of students with disabilities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Schulzentrum Ungargasse (SZU) is a high school with a focus on technical and business subjects for youth aged 14–19, located in Vienna, Austria. SZU follows a reverse integration policy when admitting new students, meaning that young people with physical and sensory disabilities are admitted initially. Only when this process is complete are the classes then filled with other students.

All students are taught according to the Austrian national curriculum, but students with additional needs are provided with assistive personnel and technical support as well as individual tutoring, if required. When required, students with disabilities are granted extended time for exams. Additional activities such as language programmes and sports weeks as well as services such as physiotherapy and wheelchair gymnastics ensure integration into regular school life.

Students with and without impairments alike benefit from this system of integrated teaching. Accessible facilities and a custom architectural environment for students with disabilities enhance the quality of this form of teaching. Spacious and well-equipped classrooms also provide pedagogical advantages. Class sizes are



The SZU high school in Vienna prioritizes the admission of students with disabilities.

smaller than usual and teaching assistants are available, if required. Students without disabilities also gain from the inclusive schooling model as they gain confidence in working together with people with disabilities.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

SZU is a state-funded school. It evaluates and implements new technologies (e.g., students' digital devices and systems), increases technical support, and expands physical education opportunities for its students with disabilities. The school regularly receives visits from international delegations and is often cited as a best-practice example.



“Living and learning together by embracing diversity.”

Dr. Martina Mikovits, SZU  
Head Teacher

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 1990

- In 2023 the school had about 1,200 students in total.
- The reverse integration policy targets a 30 per cent proportion of pupils with special needs.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

 Elisabeth Schaludek-Paletschek  
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# Special support for deaf refugees in sign language, life skills, and job application

## AUSTRIA / ST. JOHN OF GOD – SUPPORT FOR DEAF UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

The Hospital St. John of God Linz is located in Linz, the capital city of the State of Upper Austria. In 2022 and 2023 the hospital supported 47 refugees who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing accommodation and counselling, but also by organizing German and Austrian Sign Language courses. The hospital cooperated intensively with the regional Federation of the Deaf, which created a unique and targeted support system for those refugees whose special needs are usually neglected.

### Problem targeted

The project addresses the needs of refugees who are deaf or hard of hearing and must quickly learn both written German, in order to communicate with hearing Austrians, and Austrian Sign Language, in order to make use of special services for them.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Hospital St. John of God Linz (Konventhospital Barmherzige Brüder Linz) is a large hospital in the capital city of Upper Austria that includes a department for the deaf, and which is staffed with people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Following the start of the war in Ukraine in March 2022 refugees in Germany contacted the department, and in turn the department provided targeted support for deaf refugees, placing them in three locations around Linz.

Forty-seven adults and children who are deaf or hard of hearing were supported with a variety of measures, including adapted accommodation, assistance in sign language, and customized courses in Austrian Sign Language to quickly build up language skills. The hospital also cooperated with Job.com, an education programme that supports the deaf and hard-of-hearing community in Austria with written German and Austrian Sign Language materials, courses, and resources online and in person. In addition to language skills, the refugees were provided training in social skills and job application skills as well.

Refugees from Ukraine who are deaf or hard of hearing received special support, including adapted accommodation, assistance in sign language, and customized courses in Austrian Sign language.

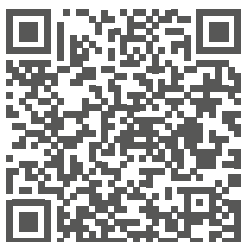


The Deaf Association of Upper Austria (Gehörlosverband Oberösterreich) was involved in the preparation and implementation of the project from its very beginnings, as were deaf employees of the hospital and deaf members of the communities of the three villages where the refugees had been placed.

At the end of 2022 most of the displaced persons had found jobs and homes.


### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The project was mainly financed by the hospital itself, by private donations, and with funding from the province of Upper Austria and the Social Ministry Service, a department of the Austrian Ministry of Social Affairs, which also supports the Job.com project.



Uschi (a deaf trainer at Job.com):  
“Andrii, do you also have fun at Job.com?”

Andrii (a deaf Ukrainian refugee):  
“Yes, that is important!”

 **Stefanie Breiteneder**  
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barmherzige-brueder.at/portal/issn/home

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2022

- In 2022, 47 deaf children and adults found accommodation and were accompanied by a team of mobile caregivers.
- Two Austrian Sign Language courses are continuously run by the Job.com team, with a total of 20 participants.
- A project of Civil Society.

# E-government automatically transferring disability benefits without any bureaucracy

## AZERBAIJAN / MIN. OF LABOUR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION – E-GOVERNMENT

The Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Azerbaijan has implemented a reverse system for receiving disability benefits and pensions that eliminates the need for individuals to submit applications or gather paperwork by automatically verifying eligibility and assigning benefits. The system pulls information from over 80 government stakeholders, then calculates and wires the amount due. In total, over 46,800 persons with disabilities have benefited from this service between 2020 and 2023.

### Problem targeted

Applying for government-funded support services is very often an enormous bureaucratic effort in Azerbaijan, and especially difficult to manage by persons with disabilities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Republic of Azerbaijan has implemented e-government processes that have improved the efficiency and transparency of public services, including the digitalization of services related to employment, social protection, and social security. In 2019 the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Population (MLSPP) changed the systems whereby disability benefits and pensions reached the beneficiaries, and largely automated the process so that benefits and pensions are now transferred automatically.

Before 2019, to apply for benefits people with disabilities had to gather about seven documents from various governmental agencies. This lengthy and pointless procedure has been eliminated and replaced by a new, proactive mechanism.

The e-government system integrated databases and information sources from many government stakeholders, as well as the MLSPP's centralized electronic information system, which guarantees the sharing and use of information and fosters cooperation among various state entities. After a person applies online to use this government service, it



Azerbaijan has introduced a reverse system for receiving disability benefits and pensions.

automatically verifies eligibility and assigns the benefit or pension without requiring any further lengthy application or the submission of any documentation. The system assigns and calculates the social payment right away and notifies the person by SMS.

The notification includes information about the amount of the pension, the bank branch, and the time to collect a bank card. The person can also access this information via the 'e-social.az' Internet portal.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The MLSPP provides the necessary financing for maintaining the entire electronic system and it is volunteering to share its experience of using ICT to assign social payments to people with disabilities with other governments.



*“A citizen-centric approach improves efficiency overall, enabling faster and more effective delivery services to people with a disability.”*

MLSPP team member



Sabir Gojayev

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- The proactive mechanism was first implemented in 2019. Since that time, there have been 889 proactive assignments every day on average between January 2019 and May 2023, with a daily average of 1,640 during the first quarter of 2023.
- *A project of the Public Sector.*



# A community-driven and low-cost school system for children in rural areas

## BANGLADESH / DRRRA – VARANDA SCHOOL

In 2012, DRRRA, a large Bangladeshi NGO, launched VARANDA School to provide early intervention, early childhood education, and play-based preschool education for children with and without disabilities. The VARANDA School operates in a space provided by the community, with young people working as volunteers and parents in charge of teaching. Starting with 15 students in the Satkhira district in 2012, by 2023 the school was providing education to 1,030 students across eleven districts of Bangladesh.

### Problem targeted

In rural Bangladesh young children with disabilities need individual assistance to receive education.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association (DRRA) is a leading disability service provider in Bangladesh. The association's Community-Based Resource Centre for Development (CRCD) is a cost-effective and community-based solution to promote inclusive education.

The VARANDA School, as the CRCD is known, cares for children with disabilities as they continue twelve years of education. It provides a tailor-made curriculum focusing on the children's needs as well as on existing governmental pedagogy. The programme also incorporates therapeutic interventions and life-long learning.

Each VARANDA School is run by the local community and managed by the mothers of children with disabilities. Young people work as volunteers, who also serve as mentors, with one volunteer responsible for one child. Parents act as trained teachers and have access to online services and resources, which allows for a more personalized learning experience. Moreover, DRRRA has developed specifically appropriate teaching and learning materials.

In 2022 the programme operated in eleven rural districts and had a positive impact on children's academic



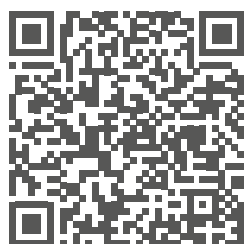
In 2023 the inclusive VARANDA School was operating in eleven districts in Bangladesh.

careers, health, and retention rates. Under an inclusive pre-primary education programme, DRRRA conducts the same course with government primary schools.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The project receives funding from Niketan (Netherlands), the Liliane Fonds Foundation (Netherlands), and DRRRA's own budget. By 2023 the CRCD/VARANDA school had already been successfully replicated by 15 local partner organizations and has influenced government policy on education.

In the next three to five years, DRRRA intends to work with the government and with local DPOs to further expand the initiative to 30 regions.




“CRCD/VARANDA is bringing inclusive education to all children through the harvest of seeds from parents.”

Farida Yesmin, Founder & Executive Director, DRRRA

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2012

- Between 2012 and 2022 community-based rehabilitation provided individual support to 6,000+ children, of whom some 3,600 were children with disabilities.
- In the same period 1,307 children with disabilities have continued their education after receiving assistance from the CRCD/VARANDA programme.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

 Sourov Kumer Paul  
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# Emergency early childhood intervention supporting over 12,000 Ukrainian refugees

**BELGIUM / EASPD ET AL. – CHILDHOOD SUPPORT FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES**

The Joint Emergency Early Childhood Development Support for Ukrainian Refugees project is led by EASPD – an association of European service providers based in Brussels – in collaboration with UNICEF and six national organizations. EASPD provided emergency early child interventions to over 12,000 Ukrainian children and parents who have been displaced by war. The 18-month project formed new models for transnational cooperation and a large database of tools and materials, all of which can be easily adapted to other regions experiencing distress.

## Problem targeted

Refugee families with small children who have disabilities and/or developmental delays face even greater difficulties in accessing support, especially cross-nationally.

## Solution, innovation, and impact

EASPD, UNICEF, and six leading social service providers in Bulgaria, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine joined forces to provide support and emergency early childhood intervention (ECI) to Ukrainian families who had fled the war and have children with developmental risks, delays, or disabilities. The project covered three areas:

- Direct support to more than 12,000 beneficiaries by 'family consultants' and peer-support facilitators (other Ukrainian refugee parents with children with disabilities). These specialists received training on relevant topics and were supported via mentoring.
- Capacity-building of the participating countries to provide ECI services to families from Ukraine and other refugees. This involved conducting research to identify gaps in support and to create actionable recommendations for NGOs and governments.
- Advocacy to achieve greater emergency ECI response on national and EU levels.

In sum, EASPD and its partners have created a vast database of project materials and have lessons-learned documents. Such a collective approach



The EASPD supports Ukrainian refugee families with young children who have a disability.

also promotes the building of transnational support structures in emergency situations.

## Outlook, transferability, and funding

The funding model is a combination of self-funding and public funding. EASPD contributed \$392,000 to the project implementation, while UNICEF's contribution was \$1,932,700 (indirectly funded by the U. S. Government).

Based on the existing tools and materials, the support model for refugees with disabilities can easily be replicated by other organizations in other refugee situations. EASPD and its partners also disseminate knowledge and learnings. For instance, in 2023 an international conference with 300+ participants on family-centred ECI was organized.



“This project showed that through transnational collaboration quality support can be provided to refugee children and their families at a time of utmost crisis and emergency.”

Timothy Ghilain, EASPD



**Lyzaveta Drannikova**

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## FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2022

- 545 family consultants and 571 peer supporters have been trained.
- Four national assessments on ECI provision to refugee children were finalized.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Local 3D production of high-quality, low-cost prosthetics in low-income countries

## BELGIUM / UGANI PROSTHETICS

Ugani Prosthetics, a start-up company based in Belgium, has developed an innovative workflow to produce affordable prosthetics targeted at persons in low-income countries. Ugani utilizes standard table-top 3D printers and smartphones as a scanner, which substantially reduces costs compared to regular production methods. At the same time, Ugani trains local orthopaedic technicians and supports them in setting up their own prosthetics workshops. Since 2021, Ugani has helped more than 100 patients in five countries, and has established a workshop in Nairobi.

### Problem targeted

Only 5 to 10 per cent of amputees in low-income countries have access to a prosthetic.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Ugani Prosthetics offers an innovative solution by using open-source tools and 3D technology to produce affordable and high-quality prosthetics and braces for above knee, below knee, lower arm, wrist, fingers, elbow, knee, ankle, and more. By using affordable table-top 3D printer-technology and a smartphone as a 3D scanner, setup costs are greatly reduced and quality prosthetics can be produced in a matter of days. The company also employs robotic simulation to ensure long-time usage.

Another advantage of the Ugani method is the increased accessibility of these devices. Due to the easy digital workflow requiring only a smartphone, trained prosthetists can travel anywhere, scan the patient in his or her own home, and deliver a finished product within a couple of days. The second pillar of the model is the training of local orthopaedic staff and managers in workshops to set up a sustainable business model, thus supporting local entrepreneurship based on high-quality technology and a global support network. Because Ugani's technology is mobile, allowing for distributed patient care even in remote or conflict areas, an orthopaedic workshop



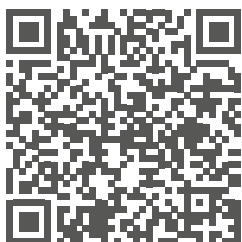
Ugani Prosthetics offers a solution to produce affordable and high-quality prosthetics.

can be setup at a cost of less than \$10,000.

After starting in Belgium in 2021, Ugani further established itself in Kenya, where it produced 70 prosthetics in its first six months.


### Outlook, transferability, and funding

To gain revenues, Ugani Prosthetics sells training units for its technology, together with a 3D pack, which contains all the required tools to launch a digital prosthetic workshop. In addition, Ugani has launched a containerized solution for regions where there is high demand. It also plans to expand its model swiftly to other countries, including such as Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda, and is seeking to collaborate with major organizations such as UNICEF.



“Ugani technology has changed my life! Affordable and comfortable, exactly what I needed.”

Evans Odhiambo, a Paralympic athlete and Ugani Prosthetics recipient, Kenya

 Florian Vallaeyes  
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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2021

- The company believes that its prosthetics are three to five times more affordable than comparable quality devices in low-income countries.
- A prosthetic workshop can be set up for less than \$10,000.
- A project related to ICT.

# Life Stories from around the world

THE STORY OF HANNA SÁLING,  
PARTICIPANT OF A SALVA VITA PROGRAMME

**“The result of all the work I put in was a real success story, because I got a job!”**

*Hungary*

My name is Hanna Sáling and I took part in the L.I.K.E. programme, a project of the Salva Vita Foundation, which aims to help young people with various challenges who are not working or who are studying to find a place in the world and to find a good path. We have had many lasting experiences through the programme's colourful activities, such as animal-assisted therapy, art therapy, joint creations, discussions, excursions, work experience, and more.

We formed a very good community, we made a lot of good friends and acquaintances, and we have kept in touch ever since. But wait, there's one more thing I didn't mention: For me, the result of all the work I put in was a real success story, because I got a job! A real dream job! I work in the home office of Alfa Rehabilitation Nonprofit Ltd. collecting company data from the Internet in Excel spreadsheets. I love it!

**i** See also Factsheet on page 43.

THE STORY OF GANESH KUMAR RISHIDEV, BENEFICIARY OF  
THE DISABILITY PREVENTION AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME BY  
KARUNA FOUNDATION

**“My grades started to improve, and I felt like a new person.”**

*Morang District, Nepal*



My name is Ganesh Kumar Rishidev, and I am an 18-year-old male resident of the Morang District of Nepal. I was born hard of hearing, which made my life quite challenging. Growing up I faced difficulties in communication and learning, and I often felt left out in a world that relied heavily on the sense of hearing.

But then, something incredible happened. I became a beneficiary of the Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Programme in my community. The day I received my hearing aid was a turning point in my life. I remember the overwhelming excitement I felt as I put it on, and the world of sound opened up to me.

With my new hearing aid I enrolled in a local school, a dream I had held onto for so long. For the first time in my life, I could hear my teachers clearly, understand what they were saying, and actively participate in class. My grades started to improve, and I felt like a new person. But it wasn't just about academics; it was about personal growth. My confidence soared as I gained the ability to communicate with others, make friends, and be an active part of my community. The quiet, introverted boy I once was transformed into a vibrant and enthusiastic member of the community.

**i** See also Factsheet on page 64.

THE STORY OF LUCERO  
MÁRQUEZ, USER OF THE APP  
MORADA

**“Unfortunately, many women normalize certain types of violence.”**

*Mexico*

I am Lucero Márquez and I am blind due to premature retinopathy. I first learned about the Morada app in 2021 when I was going up the stairs in the building where I live. My neighbour was coming down, but he was drunk, and he touched me inappropriately. He sent me messages saying that he wanted to sleep with me and other explicit things. This is how I found out about the Morada app. Through the app I was able to discover the organizations that could help me and what actions I could take.

In 2022 I had a miscarriage and experienced various forms of violence from the father of my child, including emotional abuse, economic abuse, and ghosting. Unfortunately, many women normalize certain types of violence without realizing it until they start hurting and have unwanted consequences. Through CIDIP, the organization behind the Morada app, I got in touch with women's networks and was even able to have therapy. The truth is, in Mexico it is difficult to find organizations that support women with disabilities from a gender perspective. CIDIP was the only institution I found that could address both of these issues.

**i** See also Factsheet on page 62.



## THE STORY OF LISA STANGL AND HER DAUGHTERS, USERS OF THE LINGVANO APP

**“I teach them new signs and build a relationship with appropriate access to language.”**

*Austria*



My name is Lisa Stangl and I'm a hearing mother of two deaf children. They have two Cochlear implants, but ÖGS (Austrian Sign Language) is their first language. Thanks to the support of the deaf community in Austria, I got ÖGS translators for my daughter in primary school. The other class teacher tries her best to learn ÖGS, even during her holidays and before school.

I don't live in a big city with an opportunity to take ÖGS classes. I was really determined to learn how to sign for my children, but it was a struggle to get everything under one roof. When I found out Lingvano is offering remote sign language classes where I don't have to attend a fixed schedule I was over the moon!

I've been using the Lingvano App for three years to learn ÖGS to communicate with my children. I teach them new signs and build a relationship with appropriate access to language. At the moment they are too young to use the app by themselves, but we use it together. One day my children and I will explore American Sign Language on Lingvano together.

**i** See also Factsheet on page 23.

## THE STORY OF MAI JIAXIN, FORMER PARTICIPANT OF THE US CHINA DEAF LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY PROJECT

**“Within the first month everything I knew about being a deaf person changed.”**

*United States/China*

My name is Jiaxin Mai, and when I was 27 years I arrived in America from China to begin my leadership development at St. Cloud State University (SCSU), in the state of Minnesota. Within the first month everything I knew about being a deaf person changed. It was a transformative experience.

I grew up in a hearing family. During my school years I felt alone because I was the only deaf student. Later, when I attended college, I learned sign language and became proud of being deaf. But this pride was nothing like what I felt after my experience at SCSU. I met deaf leaders who were teachers, engineers, and even heads of organizations. Many had PhDs! It showed me that anyone can be themselves.

Since my return to China, I have been busy continuing my learning and leadership by being an international volunteer. I volunteered for the World Federation of the Deaf conference in South Korea, and I've been learning Korean Sign Language. I am also volunteering with some organizations in Malaysia. I feel I have grown so much in my leadership, and in November 2023 I started a job teaching sign language.

**i** See also Factsheet on page 89.



## THE STORY OF STEPHEN OCHIENG, BENEFICIARY OF UGANI PROSTHETICS

**“I can even drive a car or ride a motorbike, and it's easier to walk up a hill.”**

*Belgium/Kenya*

My name is Stephen Ochieng and I am 32 years old. I am a cobbler from Nairobi, Kenya, and a bilateral amputee. I lost both my legs below the knees during a train accident. In March of 2023, I received the first prosthetics made in Kenya with the 3D technology of Ugani Prosthetics. The prosthetics are much lighter and more flexible, while the joints are moving. This means I can even drive a car or ride a motorbike. It's also more comfortable and easier to walk up a hill.

The prosthetics were made in just two days, much faster than my old traditional ones, while they also cost half the price. Since I received these prosthetics I have become more mobile, I was able to improve my family's life, and I became more involved in my community.

**i** See also Factsheet on page 28.

# Free sign language translation application in Portuguese with millions of monthly translations

## BRAZIL / FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF PARAÍBA – VLIBRAS SUITE

Federal University of Paraíba and the Brazilian Federal Government have developed VLibras, a sign language translator that is entirely public, free, and open source. Its vocabulary has approximately 21,000 signs – animated in 3D – and about 100,000 sentences in Portuguese and Brazilian Sign Language (Libras). In addition, the university has started a public service that offers machine translation from Portuguese to Libras for any Brazilian website. In 2023, VLibras had approximately 40 million daily accesses and performed around 3 million translations per month.

### Problem targeted

Deaf persons in Brazil face significant barriers to communication and access to digital information since sign language is rarely available.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

VLibras Suite is an open-source platform for machine translation from Portuguese to Brazilian Sign Language (Libras). Components include browser plugins, mobile apps, desktop tools, and video translation portals that allow digital content to be dynamically translated and rendered by a 3D virtual sign language interpreter avatar.

One of the most important things when building machine translation solutions for any language is to have a massive quantity of data in that language. This is not the case for sign languages, however, and therefore it was one of the primary challenges to creating VLibras Suite. To address this challenge required a considerable effort from hundreds of people to create a bilingual Portuguese-Libras corpus with around 100,000 sentences and to organize and consolidate a set of more than 21,000 signs, one of the largest free sign language translation databases globally. VLibras also includes WikiLibras, a crowd-sourcing tool for the deaf community to expand their vocabulary and improve translations.

VLibras has 40 million daily accesses, and performs 3 million translations per month.



VLibras Suite is an open-source translator from Portuguese to Brazilian Sign Language.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The VLibras Suite is the result of a partnership between the Ministry of Management and Innovation in Public Services, the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship, and the Federal University of Paraíba. Through this partnership all research and development projects are financed and carried out, which allows for hiring researchers, linguists, sign language interpreters, and deaf consultants, as well as everything else needed to maintain and develop the VLibras Suite tools.

Federal University of Paraíba intends to expand the VLibras platform to other sign languages. A new solution, called OpenSigns, will utilize common components for generic functionalities derived from VLibras, including manipulation of 3D models and interchangeable mechanisms.



“VLibras allows Brazilian deaf to access information in the digital world more independently and autonomously.”

Tiago Maritan Ugulino de Araújo, Professor, Federal University of Paraíba

 **Tiago Maritan Ugulino de Araújo**  
tiagomaritan@lavid.ufpb.br – vlibras.gov.br

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2016

- VLibras has been integrated into over 120,000 Brazilian websites.
- In 2023, VLibras performed around 3 million translations per month.
- *A project related to ICT.*

# After-school programme for children with intellectual disabilities to attend mainstream classes

## BRAZIL / JÔ CLEMENTE – SPECIALIZED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE CENTRE

Instituto Jô Clemente, a large national NGO and service provider based in São Paulo, Brazil, runs the Specialized Educational Assistance Centre (SEAC) project. It supports access to regular education for pupils with intellectual disabilities and Autism Spectrum Disorder. SEAC provides learning sessions in well-equipped rooms, uses accessible pedagogical resources, and offers training sessions for teachers and support for families. Between 2011 and 2023 the project has grown significantly, assisting over 320 children and teenagers with disabilities in 2022.

### Problem targeted

There is a need for greater dialogue with schools and teachers regarding pupils with intellectual disabilities to ensure continued teacher training and the alignment of educational strategies.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Specialized Educational Assistance project is an after-school support service that empowers students with disabilities and Autistic Spectrum Disorder to join and stay in mainstream schools and classes.

Upon arriving at Instituto Jô Clemente students go through an assessment process to identify their abilities as well as any barriers that may hinder their full participation within school and the social context. Based on this assessment, an Individual Assistance Plan is created for every student.

SEACs provide students with pedagogical resources customized to their needs. Training takes place in well-equipped rooms, including logical-mathematical thinking games, sensory stimulating games, board games, electronic games, didactic books, musical instruments, musical toys, oral and written language games, educational software, and assistive technologies. For instance, logical-reasoning games are used to train students to name, to visually discriminate, to perform correspondences, and to acquire preschool concepts such as size, weight, shape, colour, and quantity.



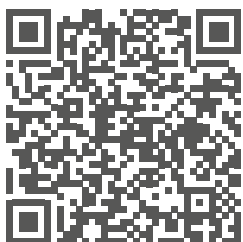
SEAC training includes logical-mathematical thinking games, sensory stimulating games, and board games.

For the development of attention and for the understanding of rules, students use board games. At the same time, teachers are trained – using accessible pedagogical resources and video recorded training sessions – on the topics of inclusive education, available also at the institute's website.

The institute currently runs four units and supports 320 children and teenagers.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Instituto Jô Clemente is funded by city, state, and national governments based on a five-year contract, which may be renewed after those five years. Currently, it is conducting consultancy for a specific school in the city of Piracicaba (in the countryside of the State of São Paulo), where it is planning to replicate its model.



“We research heavily in all areas to promote the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. Inclusive education is an issue that needs to be addressed by everyone.”

Rosell Olher, Inclusion Educational Service Supervisor, Jô Clemente Institute



Wanessa Alves

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2011

- By the end of 2023, all of the 320 children supported are and stay in mainstream schools.
- Based on an assessment, an Individual Assistance Plan is created for every student.
- A project of Civil Society.

# A training course for teachers on how to use the arts to make their education practices inclusive

## BRAZIL / MAIS DIFERENÇAS – INCLUSIVE EDUCATION LABORATORY

Mais Diferenças, a Brazilian NGO based in São Paulo, is committed to fostering inclusion in education and culture. The organization has developed the Inclusive Education Laboratory, a specialized methodology designed for public school educators in São Paulo. This laboratory offers a 20-hour course focusing on integrating art into teaching methods, curricula, and activities for students, both with and without disabilities. From 2019 to 2023, across five editions of the laboratory, about 300 educators from 233 São Paulo schools received training.

### Problem targeted

Many educators struggle to engage with cultural programmes due to limited time and uncertainty about incorporating artistic methods, often exacerbated by a lack of training resources.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Mais Diferenças has developed its Inclusive Education Laboratory as a 'train the trainer' model whereby educators are equipped to incorporate the arts into their cultural and educational repertoire. The course introduces various artistic disciplines, including visual arts, cinema, music, theatre, and literature, and is complemented by training materials. These sessions foster discussions on how art can enhance inclusive and diverse educational practices. One example is a workshop led by visual artist Paulo Bordhin, who employs materials such as aluminium and telephone wires in his art. He has shared his techniques with teachers, inspiring them to create tactile materials for student activities.

The laboratory is accredited by the Technical Training Centre of the Municipal Secretariat of Education of São Paulo and forms part of the municipality's training programme. The developed methodologies are published and shared by the secretariat.

By 2023 the laboratory has trained approximately 300 educators from 233 schools in São Paulo,



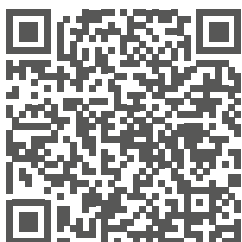
Inclusive Education Laboratory supports educators to integrate art into inclusive education.

primarily catering to kindergarten and elementary school teachers, 80 per cent of whom are women. The programme's impact is regularly assessed, showing increased use of artistic languages in classrooms and more frequent visits by educators to cultural events.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Funding for Mais Diferenças is sourced through partnerships with private foundations and the public sector, aligning with broader inclusive education initiatives. In 2023 the Inclusive Education Laboratory expanded to São Paulo's eastern region.

Over 90 per cent of participants have rated the course as 'excellent'.



"The most remarkable thing is how much art and culture promote a more respectful and richer perspective in us."

Participant educator from a São Paulo public school



Thaís Martins

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- The laboratory primarily caters to kindergarten and elementary school teachers, 80 per cent of whom are women.
- A project of Civil Society.



# Inclusive education and vocational training in remote rural areas of South-East Asia

## CAMBODIA – PURSAT / DDSP – MITH KOMAR PIKAR

Disability Development Services Programme (DDSP), a Cambodian NGO, implements community-based inclusive education projects in the rural Pursat province in western Cambodia. DDSP integrates children with disabilities into mainstream schools by improving the accessibility of the facilities and by conducting multi-day capacity-building courses for teachers, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport. The number of pupils in inclusive classes increased from 255 in 2020 to 1,105 in 2023, almost evenly split between boys and girls.

### Problem targeted

Children with disabilities and children of people with disabilities in rural areas of Cambodia find it hard to get an adequate education or vocational training.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Disability Development Services Programme (DDSP), a regional NGO, runs a community centre in the Pursat province and supports people with disabilities in remote and rural communities in that area. DDSP's community-based inclusive development activities focus on all types of disabilities, including people with severe disabilities.

A leading project of DDSP is Mith Komar Pikar (Friends of Children with Disabilities), a multi-faceted project for the education and rehabilitation needs of children with disabilities as well as the socio-economic needs of their families. Mith Komar Pikar maps neighbourhoods to identify children who are currently out of school, organizes community awareness-raising programmes for parents and the community, informs about the rights of children and all persons with disabilities, and provides scholarships. It also builds school ramps, accessible latrines, accessible water facilities and playgrounds, and much more.

DDSP also provides technical and vocational education and training through its Inclusive Training Centre, teaching cooking, sewing, motor-bike repair, and basic computer and English skills. The



The Inclusive Training Centre and Plastic Recycle project provide skills and knowledge to youth with disabilities.

organization's Inclusive Training Centre and Plastic Recycle project provide skills and knowledge to youth with disabilities, enabling them to find employment or start a social enterprise. In 2022–2023, DDSP supported more than 1,000 children with physical and intellectual disabilities to enter mainstream schools, most of whom attended English classes, and many attended computer, sewing, or motorbike repair classes as well.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

DDSP is mainly funded by individuals and international donors, such as Aide et Action, People's Action for Inclusive Development, Medical Scientific Aid for Viet Nam, the Governments of Laos and Cambodia, and the Korea Foundation for International Healthcare. Funding of the projects that were active in 2023 amounted to approximately \$50,000.



“Through the Mith Komar Pikar project discrimination is reduced, and teachers have a greater understanding on disability issues.”

Samnang Pheng, Executive Director, DDSP



Samnang Pheng

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2003

- 844 government teachers have been trained in inclusive education.
- A project of Civil Society.



# Early stimulation programme for children with Down Syndrome in an academic setting

CHILE / CENTRO UC SÍNDROME DE DOWN, UCATOLICA – PEID PROGRAMME

The Santiago-based Centro UC Síndrome de Down, affiliated with Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, has developed a Comprehensive Developmental Stimulation Programme (SIDS) for children aged 0–6 years with Down Syndrome to support their early childhood development. Children are stimulated through group activities that promote their personal and cognitive development as well as their emotional well-being and interpersonal relationship skills through arts and psycho-education. Starting in 2017 with 15 children, the programme served 48 children in 2023.

## Problem targeted

There are no public programmes in Chile to ensure the development of children with Down Syndrome through early stimulation adapted to their needs.

## Solution, innovation, and impact

The Centro UC Síndrome de Down is an interdisciplinary institution of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile and is dedicated to improving the quality of life of people with Down Syndrome, from prenatal life to old age. In 2017 a team consisting of a paediatrician and professionals from the fields of special education, physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupational therapy, art therapy, and psychology developed the Programa de Estimulación Integral del Desarrollo (PEID). This comprehensive developmental support programme focuses on children with Down Syndrome aged 0–6 years, the time when brain plasticity is at its greatest and young children can realize their maximum developmental potential.

The programme focuses on several developmental areas, including communication, cognition, psychomotor skills, emotional well-being, and social relationships. It consists of two sub-programmes: PEID I, for children aged 0–3 years; and PEID II, for children aged 3–6 years. This group approach allows for interaction, participation, and recognition in the community, based on systematic individual assessments and personalized adjustments. Between 2017



SIDS supports children with Down Syndrome in their early childhood development.

and 2023 the number of supported children grew from 15 to 48. In 2019 complementary activities, such as webinars and workshops for siblings and grandparents, were implemented.

## Outlook, transferability, and funding

The programme is half self-funded and half funded by the participating families, with grants for lower-income families through funding by families of higher means. Further funding comes from donations from private individuals and businesses.

There is already an experience of replication in Chile. Future goals include expanding the programme to other regions, and providing support materials for families and communities.



“They showed us that each person and each brain is a world to discover.”

Natalia Vilches, mother of a 9-month old child with Down Syndrome

## FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2017

- Each monthly workshop had an average of 40 grandparents and 20 siblings participating, while webinars had up to 80 participants from the community.
- Between 2017 and 2023 the number of supported children grew from 15 to 48.
- A project of Civil Society.



Macarena Lizama

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# A school offering free high-quality bilingual education for deaf children

## CHILE / INDESOR – BILINGUAL INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION PROJECT (PEIB)

Instituto de la Sordera (Indesor) is a non-profit private corporation based in Santiago de Chile that provides free high-quality education to deaf students. Starting with vocational training, Indesor's Dr. Jorge Otte Gabler School has developed into offering primary and secondary school as well. In a pioneering 'reverse inclusion' process, Indesor has also begun to educate hearing children. From 2020 to 2023, the institute has provided education to about 100 students yearly and has become a national reference centre in inclusive education for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

### Problem targeted

Deaf children and young people in Chile do not have access to education that meets their needs, and as a consequence do not have access to higher education or adequate employment.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Dr. Jorge Otte Gabler School, a non-profit organization launched in 1998 by the Instituto de la Sordera (Indesor), is the only bilingual intercultural school in the country that offers education to vulnerable deaf children, adolescents, and young people by recognizing and valuing the deaf culture and respecting the use of sign language. It began by offering vocational training to disadvantaged deaf youth in San Joaquín, Santiago, and by 2023 has expanded its offerings to include primary and secondary education.

Through the Proyecto de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe (PEIB) project, Indesor provides free, high-quality education to deaf students from low-income families. This education model is fully bilingual (Spanish and Chilean Sign Language) and features self-developed training models for teachers and a variety of learning materials.

Beyond the classroom, Indesor collaborates with numerous civil society organizations to foster the academic, social, and professional integration of its graduates. The institute also offers free sign language



Indesor provides free, high-quality education and vocational training for deaf people.

courses for families with deaf children and for schools integrating deaf students. Additionally, it provides online resources, including materials on preventing sexual abuse of deaf children, and hosts complimentary lectures and webinars, all at no charge.


### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The most important source of income for Indesor is a regular subsidy by the Chilean Ministry of Education of appx €500,000 annually, with additional income from donations and course sales.

The Ministry of Education has commissioned Indesor to train deaf professionals and educators who work with deaf children throughout the country.



The institute offers free sign language courses for families with deaf children and for schools integrating deaf students.

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instituto/colegio-dr-jorge-otte

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 1998

- PEIB has reached over 600 children since 1998, nearly evenly split between girls and boys.
- In 2022 the PEIB received the Ibero-American Prize for Human Rights Education from the Organization of Ibero-American States.
- A project of Civil Society.

# LEGO® robotics workshops improve team work and self-confidence of children with disabilities

COLOMBIA / FUNDACIÓN BIOSBOT ROBÓTICA – TEAM BIOSBOT

Fundación Biosbot Robótica is a small foundation based in Bogotá with a focus on promoting inclusion and breaking down barriers for children diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, autism, and victims of bullying. In 2019 the foundation created Team Biosbot to support children from diverse backgrounds who come together and use LEGO Robotics Kits to improve building and planning skills, promote teamwork, and enhance self-esteem. Since 2019 more than 150 children and 300 families have worked with Team Biosbot, and many have participated in national and international competitions.

### Problem targeted

Children with special needs and victims of bullying often suffer from low self-confidence and lack knowledge about their true capabilities and potential.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Fundación Biosbot Robótica is a small, privately funded foundation that aims to promote the social inclusion of children and young people diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome or other types of autism, as well as children who have been victims of bullying. To this end, robotics workshops based on the LEGO® Robotics Kits are organized for children and young people. The workshops are held in low-income regions of Bogotá, mainly in kindergartens, and are aimed at children and young people aged 3 to 18 who have no prior experience with this technology.

Robotic teams called Team Biosbot are formed in which children with diverse backgrounds, including neurotypical children and those with special needs, come together to develop skills in robot programming and mechanics, as well as in soft skills such as leadership, teamwork, creative thinking, and project application. The goal is to strengthen social interactions so that all members of the teams improve their self-esteem, raise their tolerance of frustration, and eventually get the opportunity to participate in national and international robotics tournaments.

Team Biosbot brings together children from different backgrounds.



Since 2019 the project has reached more than 150 children and 300 families. Team Biosbot was the national champion of the First LEGO® League in 2018 and 2022; secured the 28th position at the World Robotics Tournament in Houston, Texas, in 2019; and was runner-up in 2023.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The project is financed by founding members of Fundación Biosbot Robótica and from the sale of promotional items by Team Biosbot. Despite limited financial resources, it has been possible to replicate the project in various locations and kindergartens in Bogotá.



“At Team Biosbot we are breaking down barriers to social inclusion through robotics and science.”

Ana Beatriz Mosquera Ropero

 Pedro Melo Quintero  
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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- Team Biosbot was the national champion of the First LEGO® League in 2018 and 2022.
- Since 2019 more than 150 children and 300 families have worked with Team Biosbot.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# A school educating a majority of deaf students with a minority of hearing students

## COLOMBIA / FUNDACIÓN ICAL – INVERSE INCLUSION

Fundación ICAL, a foundation based in Chía near Bogotá, runs a specialized school in which students with and without disabilities study together, using a self-developed model called Inverse Inclusion. With a particular focus on deaf students, Inverse Inclusion educates a majority of deaf students with a minority of hearing students in the same classroom, using highly developed methodologies. By 2023 more than 170 students – aged 3 to 25 years – were learning at ICAL, and the model had received numerous national and international awards.

### Problem targeted

In low-income areas deaf children do not have access to quality education for their special needs.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Fundación ICAL has been running a school for deaf children in Chía, a municipality near Bogotá, since 1974. The institution includes a Montessori kindergarten, primary and secondary education, as well as the programme 'Sketching my future'. The students, aged 3 to 25, come from low-income families living in both rural and urban areas. Usually, these families cannot effectively communicate with their deaf family member.

In 2000, with a rights-based approach, a model called Inverse Inclusion was launched by Fundación ICAL, targeting deaf children and their hearing siblings, enabling them to be educated in the same environment. Later, other hearing students without a deaf sibling were introduced to this inclusive education method.

Different teaching methods, such as Verbotonal and bilingual (Colombian Sign Language), are used depending on the needs of each individual pupil. ICT and personal assistance are used to support the learning of all the students. Over the years, Fundación ICAL also started to accommodate students with some intellectual disabilities, using a similar approach.



ICAL's school teaches a majority of deaf pupils together with a minority of hearing students.

From 2000 to 2023 more than 2,700 students have been educated, of whom 72 per cent on average are students who are hard of hearing or have intellectual disabilities.

The project has been recognized by the HundrED Global Collection 2022 and 2023, shortlisted by the Reimagine Education Awards 2021, shortlisted by the World's Best Schools Prize 2023, and became an active member of the Education 4.0 Lighthouses Program from the World Economic Forum.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Fundación ICAL is financed through government contracts, donations from individuals and NGOs, and from the public and private sectors. For additional revenues it offers inclusive education services, sign language classes, hearing health services, and sells hearing health products.



"ICAL Foundation means real inclusive education for children with disabilities in a traditional context."

Diana Agudelo Rojas,  
Projects Lead, ICAL Foundation

 Diana Agudelo Rojas

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2000

- Until 2023, 1,150 students with and without disabilities have studied at the Fundación ICAL school.
- A project of Civil Society.



# Inclusive education programme for children with disabilities in sub-Saharan Africa

## DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO (DRC) – UVIRA / ADED – TUNAFASI

Appui au Développement de l'Enfant en Détresse (ADED), an NGO based in the DRC, implemented a programme called Tunafasi in the Uvira region of the DRC to provide quality inclusive education to children with disabilities in mainstream schools. Tunafasi adapted the 'Inspire2Care' model of Nepal's Karuna Foundation, improving the accessibility of facilities, training staff, and organizing self-help groups for parents. Between 2020 and 2023, Tunafasi raised the school attendance of children with disabilities from 5 per cent to 68.5 per cent in its region.

### Problem targeted

In the Uvira region of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) children with disabilities face barriers to receiving a quality education, including non-accessible classrooms and teaching methods, societal stigma, and the challenges posed by poverty.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

ADED has implemented the Tunafasi programme, a replication of the 'Inspire2Care' model of Nepal's Karuna Foundation adapted to the unique context of the DRC. The multifaceted and inclusive programme fosters the integration of children with disabilities into mainstream education by collaborating with the schools to improve their accessibility, delivering specialized training to teachers and staff in inclusive teaching, and supplying proper materials and tools.

Tunafasi actively engages in community-based inclusive development by empowering parents and families through the establishment of self-help groups. Additionally, it enhances the employment potential of young people with disabilities through technical and vocational training programmes and connecting them to organize disabled persons' organizations (DPOs).

From its inception in 2020 to 2023 the programme has substantially increased school attendance rates among children with disabilities in the region. By 2022, 167 students had received technical and vocational training, organized within four DPOs.



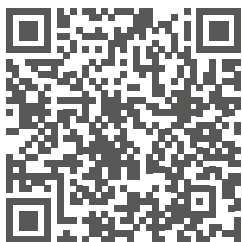
Self-help groups for parents are part of the Tunafasi model in the Uvira region of the DRC.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Tunafasi's support is a mix of public funding by the government and by philanthropic grants from Stichting Impaction, Bezev, and the Liliane Foundation (Netherlands). Parents of children and youth with disabilities contribute as well.

The programme operates in close collaboration with the DRC Government and local authorities. These authorities have adopted the community-based inclusive development strategy within the government, effectively influencing public policies.

In 2022, Tunafasi was replicated with promising results in two other regions of the DRC, and it has inspired a programme in Tanzania.



“May ADED, which is changing the lives of our disabled children, grow and its works spread and be known throughout the world.”

Mother of one of the supported children having been treated for cataracts and having fully recovered vision



Gilbert Ruturutsa

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2020

- In 2022 the programme reached 408 primary school students.
- Tunafasi has created 36 self-help groups that bring together the families of over 700 children with disabilities.
- A project of Civil Society.



# A social media platform for parents expanded to in-person support and educational events

## GEORGIA / MAC GEORGIA – MSHOBLIS SKIVRI (PARENTS’ CHEST)

MAC Georgia is an NGO based in Tbilisi, Georgia, that founded Mshoblis Skivri (Parents’ Chest) during the COVID-19 pandemic to provide education, technical, and peer support to the parents and families of children with disabilities. Started as an online service only, MAC Georgia quickly added events and personal consulting as the demand grew. By 2023 over 2,500 consultations were conducted and 3.45 million users engaged via the MAC Georgia social media channels.

### Problem targeted

There is an extensive knowledge gap for parents of children with disabilities in Georgia.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

In just a few years Mshoblis Skivri (Parents’ Chest) has become an important online resource for the parents and families of children with disabilities in Georgia. Initiated during the pandemic, it was created to provide essential information on caring for children with disabilities.

Mshoblis Skivri was developed through Facebook Live training sessions, covering topics such as feeding, wheelchair positioning, and adaptive aids. Over time, it expanded into the ‘real world’ and included parents’ groups, individualized support, and in-person events. Live events on various social media channels feature local experts from the broader disability network and cover a wide range of disability-related topics. These sessions provide opportunities for interaction, allowing viewers to get answers in real-time.

For those in need of personalized guidance, one-on-one consultations with a specialist from the MAC team are available. While both remote and in-person events are held for all parents in need, the greatest impact of Mshoblis Skivri has been found among families who live in remote rural areas who have very limited access to professional support and guidance.

Over time, a wider range of stakeholders has emerged, including inclusive and special education



MAC Georgia offers support to families of children with disabilities, online and in person.

teachers, professional rehabilitation service providers, medical doctors, and universities that offer disability-related programmes.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Since its inception in 2008, MAC Georgia has received base funding from a US foundation. It also engages in local and international fundraising and applies for national government grants.

MAC Georgia continues its outreach to ethnic minority populations and internally displaced persons. A planned initiative is a ‘readiness training’ for parents in assistive technologies, which will introduce and discuss relevant products and services as they become available in Georgia.



“We connect parents to information they can trust, no matter where they live.”

Jeremy Gaskill, CEO, MAC Georgia



Jeremy Gaskill

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- By 2023, Mshoblis Skivri had 38,000 followers on Facebook.
- In 2023, on a three-month average, more than 30,000 users engaged actively in online discussions.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Empowering inclusive education with ICT integration

## GUATEMALA / ADISA – UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

ADISA, a Guatemalan NGO, and CBM (Christian Blind Mission), an international development organization, launched a programme promoting inclusive education through Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Technical assistants, trained as inclusive education and UDL experts, collaborate with students, teachers, and parents. This programme supports students with and without disabilities in preschool and elementary school in Mayan communities. Between 2022 and 2023, ADISA trained 500 teachers and 400 parents, benefiting 800 children in ten schools.

### Problem targeted

Children with disabilities in rural Guatemala face barriers in accessing inclusive education due to limitations of learning methods, teacher skills, and digital resources.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

ADISA was founded in 1998 as a parents' committee to organize and support children with disabilities and has been an association since 2013. In 2021, ADISA and CBM developed a programme to embed the principles of UDL in Guatemalan educational practice. It has been implemented in the Mayan communities of five districts to support students in preschool and primary school (aged 4–12 years) who face barriers to learning.

As the key element of the programme, four technical assistants were trained to support students, teachers, and parents, and three resource centres were equipped with appropriate digital media. In addition, a network of educators was created to undergo mentorship and share experiences and resources.

In developing the programme cultural diversity and the economic, geographic, and attitudinal barriers that often prevent access to quality education were all taken into consideration. Teachers who have adopted the UDL are better prepared to meet diverse learning needs and experience professional growth by learning new ways of teaching and of promoting student motivation and engagement. The flexibility

Children in Guatemala participate in inclusive education through Universal Design for Learning.



of UDL promotes student autonomy and the development of self-regulation skills, resulting in a more equitable and relevant education.

In 2022 and 2023 a total of 800 children in ten schools were part of the initiative, and 400 parents were provided with knowledge and guidance.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The project receives 75 per cent of its funds from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and 25 per cent from CBM, with total funding of €600,000 for the period 2021–2024.

During a conference in August 2023, presentation of results to the Ministry of Education led to the exploration of opportunities for further replication in other parts of Guatemala and partner cities abroad.



“UDL has changed my way of teaching and has allowed me to see in my students their abilities and new ways of learning.”

María Angélica Tziná, teacher,  
Escuela Oficial Rural Mixta  
Comunidad Chukumuk



Miriam Gallegos

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2021

- In 2023 a cross-regional training programme had reached 500 teachers.
- Moreover, a training for 35 members of the Ministry of Education staff was organized.
- A project of Civil Society.

# A Youth House empowering vulnerable young people with and without disabilities

## HUNGARY / SALVA VITA FOUNDATION – YOUTH HOUSE

Salva Vita Foundation, an NGO based in Budapest, empowers NEET (i.e., youth ages 15–29 not in education, employment, or training) with a wide spectrum of activities, including transformative animal-assisted therapy, creative art therapy, and other life-skills programmes. In addition, the foundation provides job coaching and mentorship to support youth in becoming self-reliant. From 2018 to 2022 more than 140 participants were supported, with approximately 70 finding employment afterwards.

### Problem targeted

Inadequate state support leaves Hungarian NEET and disabled youth isolated from society and job opportunities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Salva Vita Foundation has created non-formal educational programmes and courses that specifically address the needs of the young NEET population with disabilities. NEET youth often remain isolated, even in online spaces. The physical Youth House provides them with a place in which they can obtain a range of accommodating activities tailored to their developmental needs, and that address their long-term absence from higher education and the labour market.

Activities include animal-assisted therapy and developing communication skills, cooperation, and self-awareness. Art therapy is used to increase the participants' self-expression, interpersonal skills, and self-confidence; and sports helps to build a sense of team spirit and health awareness.

Counsellors (psychologists and youth workers) help to support the participants' emotional well-being, employing the Carl Rogers principles of therapy that underline empathetic understanding. Job coaching prepares participants for employment by building skills such as interviewing, communication, and

Salva Vita has launched an empowerment programme to help NEETs become self-reliant.



money management. Vocational training develops practical competencies aligned to labour market needs.

Overall, well over 30 per cent of all participants (70 out of 210) found employment after their stay in the Youth House, and four have become self-employed.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The project received primary funding from the EEA and Norway Grants. Despite the closure of the Youth House in spring 2023, the Salva Vita Foundation has secured additional grants for 2023 to 2026.



“I never thought I would find a place where I truly belong and grow. Salva gave me hope, skills, and a new family to support me.”

Viktor, a Youth House participant



Katalin Vég

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- 90 per cent of the enrolled participants were youth with disabilities.
- 30 per cent of youth found a job after the training, some of them self-employed.
- A project of Civil Society.

# School-readiness programmes piloting mainstream inclusive education

## INDIA – KARNATAKA / FOURTH WAVE – SCHOOLS WHERE ALL BELONG

Schools Where All Belong is a project of the Fourth Wave Foundation, an NGO supporting inclusive education in the state of Karnataka. It supports children with disabilities in 14 rural districts with its School Readiness Programmes, building pilot models that can be replicated by the State and civil society. Between 2006 and 2023 the project improved access to education for more than 60,000 children. In 2022 the Education Department of Karnataka mandated Fourth Wave Foundation with a major training programme for more than 30,000 participants.

### Problem targeted

UNESCO's State of the Education Report for India 2019 notes that there are around 330,000 children with disabilities in Karnataka, of whom approximately 70,000 have never received any education, and nearly 50,000 children went to school but dropped out.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Schools Where All Belong, a project of the Fourth Wave Foundation, operates in the northern part of Karnataka, where the project focuses on children with various types of disabilities, their caretakers, and parents. The programme also works for children with severe and multiple disabilities, employing home-based education.

The project is centred on school readiness programmes (SRP) whereby children are prepared for a mainstream classroom, using various therapies and learning, and based on individualized education plans for each child, covering five areas: (1) nutrition, (2) hygiene, (3) social interaction, (4) physical activity, and (5) a mechanism to assess progress and what has proven to be effective for each child.

The SRP centres are located in government schools to enable the full participation of children with disabilities in the regular schooling process. Each SRP centre accommodates 50 children, consisting of at least 25 children with severe and multiple disabilities who are home-based but attend the SRP on a weekly basis.



Schools Where All Belong improves access to education by preparing children with school readiness programmes.

Schools Where All Belong also works with state-level teachers and staff on the vocational improvement of the teaching and non-teaching staff at local government schools.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Funding for Schools Where All Belong comes from the corporate social responsibility budgets of larger Indian companies.

Fourth Wave Foundation resources can be used to replicate its work with existing government infrastructure and education policies. In 2023 the Department of Education of Karnataka was working with Schools Where All Belong for a capacity-building training programme of 1,200 teachers who will work in SRP-centres run by the State of Karnataka.



“We believe disability inclusion efforts need to show remarkable levels of commitment.”

Diana Vincent, Director,  
Fourth Wave Foundation



Akshita Shibu Joseph

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fourthwavefoundation.org

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2006

- The programme increased the enrolment of children with disabilities in government schools from 1 per cent to 30 per cent between 2006 and 2022.
- A project of Civil Society.



# Government research institute promoting sign language for STEM content

## INDIA / CSIR – IMTECH – INDIAN SIGN LANGUAGE ENABLED VIRTUAL LAB

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, a renowned Indian research and development organization established by the government, has developed the Indian Sign Language Enabled Virtual Laboratory platform to enhance STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) learning accessibility for the deaf community. The platform features a variety of engaging materials, including comics, games, infographics, simulations, and videos, accommodating different educational levels. In 2022 alone the platform added approximately 250 content videos and over 100 vocabulary videos.

### Problem targeted

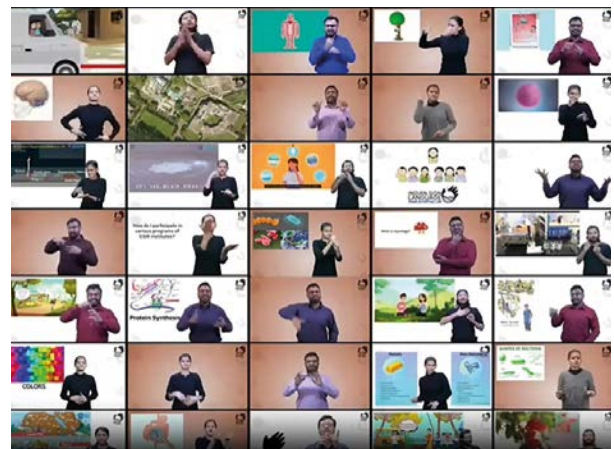
There is an enormous lack of accessible resources related to STEM education for the deaf community in India.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Indian Sign Language Enabled Virtual Laboratory (ISLEVL) platform was established by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) through its Institute of Microbial Technology (IMTECH), a government-funded research entity. This innovative platform is being developed and implemented by a team of deaf content creators, signers, and multimedia editors under the guidance of hearing scientists, special educators, and interpreters.

ISLEVL provides open access to a wide array of high-quality STEM content translated into Indian Sign Language (ISL), including comics, games, infographics, simulations, and videos – all tailored to suit various learning levels. To address the challenge of representing complex scientific terms in sign language, a special project called the STEM vocabulary was initiated. Additionally, the platform regularly disseminates scientific news in sign language through a service named STEM News.

In a collaborative effort with the Haryana Welfare Society for Persons with Speech and Hearing

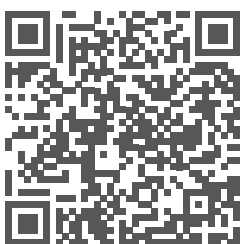


ISLEVL features a variety of materials to enhance STEM learning for the deaf community.

Impairment, CSIR – IMTECH has also established an ISL-enabled astronomy lab for deaf students in Karnal, Haryana. Named AstroLabVM, this virtual astronomy lab provides access to over 90 videos, hands-on demonstrations, and fun facts. It presents a range of simple to complex concepts of space and science, all explained in ISL.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

As part of public research institutions, programmes are funded through government research budgets.



CSIR – IMTECH has also established an ISL-enabled astronomy lab for deaf students.

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2020

- ISLEVL provides open access to a wide array of high-quality STEM content translated into Indian Sign Language.
- A project of Civil Society.



# Mainstreaming a self-employment programme India-wide with government-led institutes

## INDIA / ENABLE INDIA – ENTREPRENEURSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

EnAble India – a leading Indian DPO based in Bengaluru – has developed the Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP) to teach skills and crafts to persons with disabilities that they may become self-employed and independent. The EDP collaborates with RSETIs (Rural Self Employment Training Institutes), which are government-led institutes to develop rural youth and women entrepreneurs. Started in 2013, the EDP programme has been adopted by all 562 RSETIs across India, more than 9,000 persons have been trained, and 80 per cent of those are now self-employed.

### Problem targeted

In rural India persons with disabilities lack livelihood training opportunities, preventing them from achieving self-employment and financial independence.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP) provides tailored training on self-employment and entrepreneurship skills to persons with disabilities in rural India. Developed by EnAble India, a large Indian DPO, the curriculum focuses on entrepreneurial competences, business plan preparation, market analysis, marketing, costing and pricing, leadership, inventory management, and many more business skills.

The training curriculum includes specific domains for women with disabilities, such as beautician, tailoring, jute bag making, soft toys making, grocery shops, embroidery, floor mat weaving, bread making, and jewellery. The EDP collaborates with government-run Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs), enabling integration into mainstream skills programmes.

This training model – which follows a clearly defined order of modules, from setting up village committees and sourcing to post-training and post-placement support – has achieved scale, and has been adopted by all 562 RSETIs across India since 2013. By 2023 over 9,000 persons with disabilities have been trained, 40 per cent among them women. In addition, 51 grassroots organizations are



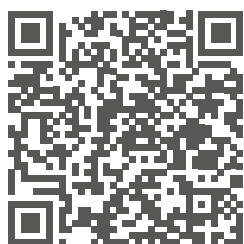
EDP teaches people with disabilities skills and crafts to become independent and self-reliant.

implementing EDP, and every day four more persons with disabilities are trained, with three of them becoming entrepreneurs.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The EDP is mainly funded by the corporate social responsibility budgets of Indian companies, and by philanthropic money. In 2023 the total budget for EDP was appx \$270,000.

The programme's future aims include creating tens of thousands more rural entrepreneurs with disabilities. A programme called Swashakti has been established for that purpose, which uses the EDP model in cooperation with rural NGOs.



The training curriculum includes specific domains for women with disabilities.

 Antony Helenraj  
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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2013

- Persons with 15 types of disabilities are developed as entrepreneurs, with an average income of \$147–196 per month in 141 different self-employment trades.
- 10 per cent of all trained persons with disabilities got married, which would be extremely difficult without a livelihood.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Indian start-up company offering paid early childhood intervention as in-house services

## INDIA / LOVEFORLIFE REHABILITATION SERVICES – LFL CARE

LoveForLife Rehabilitation Services (LFL Care) is a start-up organization, recognized by the Government of India and based in New Delhi. LFL Care offers quality personalized parent-child counselling and early intervention programmes for children with special needs as a paid service throughout India. The in-house support is based on a customized plan and can include music, occupational or speech therapy, clinical psychology, special education, or other services. More than 500 children were served in 2022–2023, most of them between 0 and six years old.

### Problem targeted

In India children with disabilities have limited access to early diagnosis, health care, and rehabilitation services, especially in remote areas.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

LFL Care provides integrated therapeutic services that follow a multidisciplinary clinical approach for early intervention and child development assessments.

LFL offers personalized home-based rehabilitation services, including speech therapy, occupational therapy, psychologist review, and special education. Therapists tailor therapy programmes to the client's home environment by incorporating games, puzzles, music, and interactive activities into therapy sessions. Each child receives a customized programme delivered at home by trained therapists. Home visits reduce costs and the need for hospital visits, and they enable LFL to reach out to remote areas.

LFL Care offers services based on subscription for the number of rehabilitation sessions chosen. This includes at-home child assessment, rehabilitation sessions, psychologist review, and support materials for play activities. The cost per session varies from INR 800 to 1,500 (\$10 to \$16) per hour, based on the city and the number of sessions chosen taken by the clients. LFL Care estimates that family income has to be a minimum of INR 50,000 (\$600) per month

LFL Care offers early intervention for children with special needs in India as a paid service.



to afford its service, but also offers discounts and provides support to connect families to funding from NGOs, etc. Caregivers have a significant role in the home-based rehabilitation process.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

LFL Care was started with initial funding by its founder in 2017. It is organized as a paid service for the parents or caregivers of the children, to be self-sustainable, and able to expand its reach within the country.

LFL Care seeks to serve over 10,000 persons by 2025 across India, based also on collaborations with institutions, NGOs, and government bodies. The organization also invests in creating digital and physical infrastructure for the skills development of rehabilitation professionals.



“I believe in creating an inclusive world and providing similar opportunities for all, based on their abilities and potential.”

Surabhi Agarwal, Founder, LoveForLife Rehabilitation Services

 Surabhi Agarwal  
founder@loveforlife.in – loveforlife.in

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2017

- LFL Care grew more than 300 per cent from 2020 to 2023, reaching more than 500 children in 2022 and more than 1,000 by 2023. Revenue grew 50 per cent annually from 2020 to 2023.
- A project of the Business Sector.

# Concerted effort promoting ICT devices for children with disabilities in low-income contexts

## INDIA / SIGHTSAVERS – EIGHT-STATE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Sightsavers India is a national NGO working in the fields of inclusive education and social inclusion. Their project provides accessible ICT devices such as DAISY players, mobile phones, laptops loaded with accessible textbooks, and other learning materials to children in remote areas. It works with state education systems and simultaneously builds the capacities of various DPOs to advocate for usage of these devices. The project started in five districts in 2018, and by 2023 it has been scaled up to 20 districts in eight states.

### Problem targeted

Learners with visual impairments in India have much less access to ICT and accessible materials than their fully-sighted peers.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Sightsavers India is supporting the provision of age-appropriate ICT devices and training to children.

These devices include DAISY players (audio book players), smartphones, laptops, and associated software (e.g., screen readers with Hindi and 16 regional languages built in). School textbooks and other learning materials are made available in e-libraries, including materials in regional languages.

Children are also provided with the training, coaching, and mentoring that enables them to use these ICT devices for multiple purposes, such as word-processing, recording lessons, surfing the Internet, and communicating with their friends, family, and teachers.

In addition, block resource centres have been developed that serve as digital resource centres, e-libraries for print-disabled learners have been established, and eight states have assumed significant levels of financial, technical, and administrative responsibility for ICT provision. Sightsavers India has also assisted DPOs to audit schools and to lobby state education ministries to fund ICT provision for learners with disabilities.



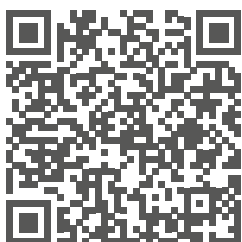
Sightsavers India provides children with accessible ICT devices and learning materials.

In 2022 the programme supported more than 6,000 learners with visual impairments enrolled in mainstream primary and secondary schools.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The project was originally funded by the corporate social responsibility budgets of larger Indian companies, which by law must dedicate 2 per cent of their revenues to social causes.

Going forward, four State Education Departments allocated INR 110 million (\$1.3 million) to ICT for these learners in their 2023–2024 budgets. Moreover, the programme has been embedded in regional state work plans and budgets, ensuring long-term funding sources.



“Without the support of the project, I would not have been able to study, let alone score the highest marks in my school.”

Manoranjan, student, Inclusive Education Programme, Sightsavers India



Guy Le Fanu

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- In 2022 the initiative supported more than 6,000 learners with visual impairments.
- In 2023 a survey found that almost all learners with visual impairments use ICT.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Pre-incubator supporting social innovation and entrepreneurship in assistive technology

INDIA / TCS FOUNDATION – DIGITAL IMPACT SQUARE (DISQ)

Digital Impact Square (DISQ) is an incubation programme for start-ups in the field of Assistive Technology (AT), run by Tata Consultancy Services Foundation – part of a leading Indian IT-consultancy group and located in Nashik, Maharashtra. DISQ provides skill-building, mentoring, and a seed fund to support young innovators with their start-ups, focusing on various thematic areas, including AT for persons with disabilities. By 2023 DISQ had supported eight start-ups and estimates that the lives of over 100,000 persons with disabilities and their caregivers have been improved.

## Problem targeted

Early-stage start-ups working on innovative AT often struggle to become viable due to lack of mentoring, validation, and financial support.

## Solution, innovation, and impact

The DISQ Innovation Centre at Nashik is designed to encourage creative thinking. Its layout enables innovators to interact with each other freely and to develop an open culture of innovation. The highly accessible centre can accommodate up to 100 innovators and is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, including a maker space, break-out rooms, video conference rooms, and a recreational space for indoor games.

Besides a physical infrastructure, DISQ provides mentoring, coaching, access to ecosystems specific to their challenges, and a seed fund, usually paid as a monthly stipend. The Impact Innovation Framework created by DISQ has enabled one in four start-ups to succeed and become financially sustainable, a very high percentage when compared to the average success ratio of three in 100. One example of a successful start-up is KIBO (developed by Trestle Labs), a global reading and learning platform that translates any printed text, including handwriting, into audio formats and is already deployed in 20+ countries.

Another is Kidaura, a screening tool for early detection of risk of autism or related cognitive impairments, currently deployed in four countries. Yet



DISQ is an incubation programme for Indian start-ups in the field of Assistive Technology.

another is Dextroware Devices, a hardware device that enables hands-free operation of computers and smartphones, which has buyers from India, Thailand, and the United States.

## Outlook, transferability, and funding

The DISQ Initiative is funded by the TCS Foundation through the creation of a physical facility at Nashik, India, as well as providing financial support to all the innovators in the form of monthly stipends.

DISQ aims to scale its impact through innovation programmes across multiple cities in India in a collaboration-driven framework with its various partners. The model has already been adopted by Petronas Inc, Malaysia, for its social entrepreneurship incubation programme, called SEED Labs.



“DISQ nurtures Indian youth to address complex social challenges with an entrepreneurial spirit.”

Sameer Rawal, Founding Member and Impact Innovation Coach – Assistive Technologies, Digital Impact Square



Sameer Rawal

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## FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2016

- In 2023 at least two of the start-ups had co-founders who are persons with disabilities.
- Two other startups – Trestle Labs and Dextroware Devices – had at least one person with disabilities as part of their core team.
- A project of the Business Sector.



See corresponding Life Story on page 56.



# A 10-year plan for a metropolitan city making 10,000 km of sidewalks accessible

## IRAN / OMRAN ZAVEH ENGINEERING CONSULTANTS CO. – ACCESSIBILITY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FOR URBAN SPACES IN TEHRAN

The Accessibility Comprehensive Plan for Urban Spaces in Tehran project started in 2019 and is operated by Omran Zaveh Engineering Consultants Co., a company based in Tehran. It focuses on identifying, categorizing, and prioritizing accessible routes; assessing sidewalk accessibility; and developing an action plan to improve sidewalks and public places. The project's output is available through an online map provided by Tehran Municipality. By 2023, 10 per cent of the metropolitan area's accessibility implementation has been completed.

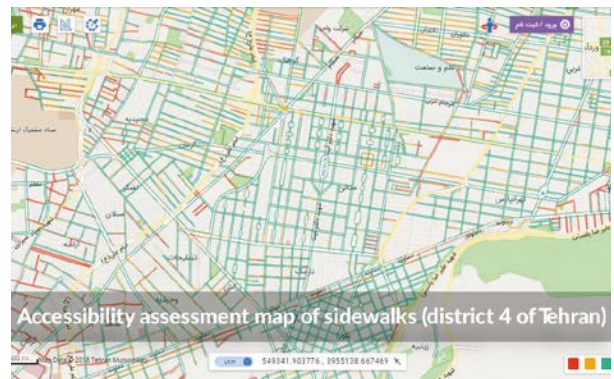
### Problem targeted

The lack of reliable information on Tehran's sidewalk accessibility often poses challenges for people with disabilities and the elderly.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Accessibility Comprehensive Plan for Urban Spaces in Tehran is based on a 2019 contract between the Accessibility Headquarters of Tehran Municipality and the Tehran-based Omran Zaveh Engineering Consultants Co., which runs the operations. Tehran is a city of more than 10 million inhabitants. To begin, the main roads were categorized into priorities and then further divided into three phases regarding the implementation of the improvements. As part of the plan, an average of 480 km of sidewalks will be constructed and 127 km will be repaired annually.

The plan introduced a web-based application for continuous data collection and analysis. It uses a method called MCDM (Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis) to understand and plan the best routes in the city. To visualize this data, a GIS-based platform helps to display and analyse information on maps. After having evaluated all Tehran's sidewalks with a width of more than 12 metres, the plan's output is an online map that allows persons with disabilities to view the accessibility of pedestrian routes. As of mid-2023 the plan had

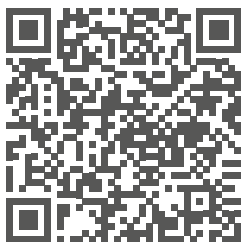


The Accessibility Comprehensive Plan for Urban Spaces in Tehran improves access to sidewalks and public places..

covered approximately 1,000 kilometres out of the total 10,000 kilometres of the project (10 per cent), distributed across all 22 districts of the city.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The project received funding from Tehran Municipality's general budget after city council approval. The Accessibility Action Plan, a 10-year programme starting in 2021, aims to construct and repair sidewalks annually, with regular reviews for effectiveness. All results of improvements are publicly available.



“This inclusive model enables the enhancement of accessibility in Tehran, the capital of Iran, with a population of over 10 million.”

Hamid Fathi, Project Manager, Omran Zaveh Engineering Consultants Co.



Mani Razavizadeh

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- The project evaluated all Tehran's sidewalks with a width of more than 12 metres.
- Each year approximately 480 km of new sidewalks are either improved or newly constructed.
- A project related to ICT.



# Video-based guidance for parents/caregivers for better inclusion of children with disabilities

## ISRAEL / ISRAEL ELWYN, BAR ILAN UNIVERSITY – MISC-SR MODEL

Israel Elwyn is an NGO based in Jerusalem. Together with Bar Ilan University, it initiated the Mediation Intervention for Sensitizing Caregivers (MISC-SR) model that focuses on supporting toddlers with disabilities to reinforce the interaction between parents/caregivers with the child through video analysis. Using MISC-SR, parents improve their communication with their children in every basic area. MISC-SR includes staff training and is funded by the government and donations. Between 2020 and 2023, MISC-SR improved the lives of over 350 toddlers and their parents.

### Problem targeted

Difficulty with self-regulation often means that children with disabilities are not available for play, learning, and communication.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

In 2020, Israel Elwyn implemented the Mediation Intervention for Sensitizing Caregivers (MISC-SR) model in collaboration with the Bar-Ilan University. MISC-SR addresses the difficulties children with disabilities have in controlling emotions and reactions and behaving in ways that support social interaction and learning.

Using MISC-SR, the staff reinforces optimal parental/caregiver behaviour by analysing interaction videos with the child. For example, a therapist films ten minutes of parent-child play and shares it with the parent. This way they can detect if there is a slow response time of the child and if the parent understands the significance of this in various situations.

Another example is when the therapist encourages a child's action. The parent is shown via video where and how the child's initiative was prompted so that this information can be used in the future. Early studies on the MISC model indicated a significant connection between the quality of mediated interaction between parents and children and the resulting cognitive and social-emotional development and functioning.



MISC-SR supports children with disabilities to better control their emotions and reactions.

In addition, therapists undergo in-depth training in MISC-SR work with parents and staff to create a parental guide with specific tools. Between 2020 and 2023, 350 toddlers have worked with MISC-SR.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Israel Elwyn and the implementation of the MISC-SR model are funded by donations and public funds such as governmental support.

MISC-SR has been further scaled-up through the training of Israel Elwyn staff, including around 180 intervention programmes and a national clinical course for leading professional therapists. Israel Elwyn believes that the model can be replicated nationally and internationally and can be extended for different age groups.



“Using video reveals Yanai’s needs, and the intervention required for developmental progress.”

Nurit and Lior, Yanai’s parents



Sharon Ehrwald

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2020

- 10 per cent of the children are under one year old.
- 20 per cent of the total 350 children are girls.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# Making mainstream kindergartens more disability inclusive

## ISRAEL / KREMBO WINGS – KREMBO KINDERGARTEN

Krembo Wings is an Israeli youth movement organized as an NGO that supports young persons with disabilities. It has developed a training programme for educational teams in kindergartens and young elementary school classes whereby kindergartens receive a detailed teacher's curriculum as well as tools and guidance to develop a comprehensive and inclusive discourse in a kindergarten. The curriculum exists in Hebrew and Arabic and has grown from four kindergartens to twelve across two municipalities between 2022 and 2023.

### Problem targeted

There is a lack of readiness of mainstream kindergarten teachers to implement inclusive processes, often due to the lack of training and inclusive education plans.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Educational staff who take part in the programme participate in four to eight group training sessions, which include foundations of inclusive education, dreams and goal settings, introduction to sensory regulation, communication and educational partnership with parents, and the fundamentals of self-advocacy. In addition, a professional staff member attends the classrooms approximately five times a year to guide the educational staff according to their needs. The professional staff members include an occupational therapist, a special education teacher with the focus on integrating technologies and complex disabilities, a certified parent instructor, and a coach-mediator. Moreover, the participants receive an online booklet with ideas for games that increase communication and friendship.

An example of a classroom activity is the daily selection of 'Krembo supervisors' from among the children. Their role throughout the day is to pay attention to the social dynamics of all the kindergarten children, and at the end of the day to share with them what had occurred and what can be learned from it.



The Krembo Wings training programme makes kindergartens in Israel more inclusive.

The programme initially began in Hebrew and within the Jewish cities, but now operates in Arabic in the Arab communities as well.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Funding comes from a variety of sources, including government and local government support, donations from foundations and federations throughout the world, private donors, and fundraising activities by members.

Krembo Wings plans to partner with two more local municipalities that have adopted the programme for all the kindergartens under their supervision. Those municipalities will receive a hybrid training programme, including face-to-face training and online synchronic and a-synchronic educational materials.



“Without noticing, the children acquire competencies that are a privilege to acquire at such a young age.”

Ofek Levi, a Krembo kindergarten teacher



Bat Chen Gazala

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2020

- Between 2020 and 2023 more than 560 children have participated in the programme.
- Between 2022 and 2023 the initiative grew from four kindergartens to twelve across two municipalities.
- A project of Civil Society.

# A replicable model of an inclusive youth choir making music incorporating sign language

## JAPAN / EL SISTEMA CONNECT – THE WHITE HANDS CHORUS NIPPON

The White Hands Chorus Nippon (WHCN) is a music programme run by El Sistema Connect, an NGO based in Japan. It is an inclusive music choir that consists of deaf children, children with visual and intellectual disabilities, as well as children without disabilities. The choir, supported by the Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, combines a singing group and a gestural group that perform together and express themselves in sign language. WHCN offers free weekly lessons, organizes professional performances across Japan and abroad, and has grown from 35 members in 2017 to 98 members in 2023.

### Problem targeted

The Japanese education system lacks adequate inclusive environments for children with and without disabilities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The White Hands Chorus NIPPON (WHCN) is an inclusive youth choir with members aged 6 to 20 years, half of whom with disabilities, representing unity in diversity. Inspired by the White Hands Chorus (Coro de Manos Blancas) founded in Venezuela in 1995, the choir consists of a singing group and a gestural group that perform using sign language.

The singing group includes members with vision impairment, those who use wheelchairs, individuals with Down Syndrome, and others without disabilities. In the gestural group, deaf members express the lyrics through sign language while wearing white gloves.

Free workshops and lessons open the door for children in vulnerable situations. WHCN provides a stage for choir members to unite, regardless of their conditions or disabilities, showcasing their talents and promoting acceptance. Certified teachers, including professional artists with disabilities, actively participate in WHCN's practices and offer management advice. Online lessons are also available.

Starting with one chapter, WHCN now works with three – in Tokyo, Kyoto, and Okinawa.



WHCN was the first group with deaf or blind members to appear at the National Opera in Japan and on a national TV programme.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

WHCN is funded by a mix source. The total budget in 2023 was approximately \$150,000, with about half coming from public entities and approximately \$20,000 from the sale of tickets and workshops.

The WHCN Okinawa model is now successfully replicated across Japan, offering a blueprint for expansion. Once local sponsors, staff (comprising a music teacher and sign language interpreter), and practice facilities (local authorities, NGOs, or schools) are identified, certified teachers train new members and staff on a regular basis.

Following this, the new chapter operates independently, tailoring the programme to local needs while remaining an active part of the WHCN network for any further support.



“Music has to be recognized as an agent of social development in the highest sense, because it transmits the highest values – solidarity, harmony, mutual compassion.”

José Antonio Abreu, Founder of El Sistema in Venezuela



Erika Colon

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2017

- Audiences in live performances increased from 120 in 2020 to 3,250 in 2022.
- WHCN choir members range in age from 6 to 20 years, half of whom with disabilities.
- *A project of Civil Society.*



See corresponding Life Story on page 84.

# TV station organizing a sign language academy for interpreters specializing in sports coverage

## JAPAN / OKAYAMA BROADCASTING – OHK SIGN LANGUAGE INITIATIVE

Okayama Broadcasting Co., Ltd. (OHK), a TV and broadcasting company, initiated a specific sign language programme, further developing its existing sign language coverage. It teaches deaf interpreters in signing distinctive aspects of motor sports, such as gear shifts and acceleration, which before were not signed and communicated to the Japanese deaf population. The initiative is currently funded by the Toyota Mobility Foundation and is independently certified by the Japan Deaf Sports Federation. The initiative has special focus on the 2025 Deaflympics, which will be hosted in Tokyo.

### Problem targeted

Motor sport races are not covered properly with sign language on TV because sign language interpreters are not trained on the subject, and in many cases signs are not defined to convey the full racing experience.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Okayama Broadcasting Co., Ltd. (OHK), a medium-sized Japanese broadcasting company, has aired a special TV programme with sign language interpretation for 30 years, employing a production team of deaf people and sign language interpreters.

As a new initiative, in 2022 OHK launched a specific sign language initiative aimed at training deaf interpreters to convey the dynamics of motor sports to deaf audiences in Japan. In the first phase, an interpreter translates a reporter's voice into sign language. In the second phase, the trained deaf interpreter watches this interpreter and the race at the same time and provides sign language commentary together with much more comprehensible expressions simultaneously.

Since its beginnings in the process has expanded to include projects in collaboration with other partners and sponsors. In addition, the deaf interpreter teaches the know-how of motor sport commentary to other interpreters. Consequently, the number of participants from all over the country has been increasing. OHK has created a new department called



In Japan, OHK initiated a sign language programme to cover motorsport races properly on TV.

the Accessibility Team to improve the accessibility of information even further, aiming to create a world without barriers. OHK is creating a textbook for teaching skills such as expression methods, additional signs, and the use of necessary equipment.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

In 2023 the academy and initiative were funded by the Toyota Mobility Foundation. OHK aims to receive production fees from sponsors that support the sign language commentary so as to make this initiative sustainable.

The cost is mainly for the salary of the sign language interpreters, who are better paid than the commentators who can hear because their commentary is considered a highly specialized skill.



“I don't understand sign language, but when I saw the hand movements of the commentator, I could understand what he was trying to express.”

Akiyo Toyoda, Chairman, Board of Directors, Toyota Motor Corporation

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2022

- The OHK Sign Language Live Reporting Academy was held for two days in Okayama City's Kita Ward and was attended by seven deaf people from throughout Japan, including athletes, comic actors, and teachers from schools for the deaf.
- A project of the Business Sector.



# Freely and globally available software supporting users who are colour blind

JAPAN / RYOBİ SYSTEMS CO., LTD. – VISOLVE

Ryobi Systems Co., Ltd., a large national company based in Japan, has created Visolve, an assistive software for people with colour blindness. It allows users to focus on certain areas of a screen and to apply colour filters such as ‘red/green’ or ‘blue/yellow’, thus ensuring better colour recognition. Visolve is freely available globally. Between 2005 and 2023 the software has been downloaded 72,000 times. As a second service, Ryobi offers paid services to companies supporting them to create colour blind-friendly products.

## Problem targeted

Colour blindness poses challenges for individuals in distinguishing and recognizing true colours, especially when using computer screens.

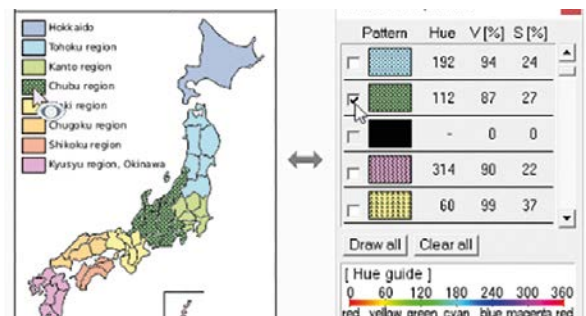
## Solution, innovation, and impact

Visolve is assistive software that supports people with colour blindness in various ways: distinguishing colours, finding specific colours, and realizing true colours. It allows the user to focus on screen areas and to apply colour filters. The support tools consist of three different software options.

The first is a simulator running on iOS, whereby users can check if various products have a problem for colour blind people using an iPhone/iPad. The second is an add-in software for MS Office that helps to create colour blind-friendly charts in the users’ documents. The third one is a simulation toolbar working on Windows, whereby users can check the content colour of every application on Windows.

Visolve can execute the following types of colour transformation, filtering, and hatching:

- Red-Green: transforms redder colours to brighter, and greener colours to darker,
- Blue-Yellow: transforms bluer colours to brighter, and yellower colours to darker,
- Saturation: increases the saturation of all colours,
- Filtering: darkens all colours other than a specified



The Japanese software Visolve helps people with colour blindness to find their way around.

colour, and

- Hatching: draws different hatch patterns depending on colour.

Visolve also offers consulting services for companies in Japan. Visolve is freely available to maximize access and works with Windows and Apple systems. Between 2020 and 2022 the software has been downloaded some 6,000 times globally.

## Outlook, transferability, and funding

Ryobi Systems Co., Ltd., is a for-profit company that offers Visolve for free, and is financed by revenue income from its consulting services. The company intends to further grow into new markets and plans to expand the business model by embedding their assistive software in the products of other companies, charging them licensing fees.



“I was often bothered by colour-coded signs while on the go, but I no longer have to worry about it owing to the Visolve app.”

Yasuyuki Okabe, Executive officer,  
Ryobi Systems Co., Ltd.



Masahiko Shimoda

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## FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2005

- In 2023, Visolve for Windows/macOS had 70,000+ colour blind users worldwide.
- The Visolve iOS app is used in 56 countries.
- A project related to ICT.



# Life Stories from around the world



THE STORY OF MALVIKA IYER, A BENEFICIARY OF A START-UP SUPPORTED BY THE DISQ INCUBATION PROGRAMME

**“Mouseware enables hands-free control with simple head movement.”**

*India*

I'm Malvika Iyer and I'm a disability rights activist with a doctorate in social work. When I was 13 years old I survived a bomb blast in India, but lost both hands. Bionic hands are a wonderful innovation for certain types of amputations, but not everyone benefits from it equally. I have used electronic hands for almost a decade, but I have found myself to be more independent without them. I'm always looking for assistive devices other than artificial hands that can make my life a little bit easier. And that's when I connected with Dextroware Devices (a former participant in the DISQ incubation programme) and Mouseware, a head-wearable device that enables hands-free control of computers and smartphones with simple head movements.

Anyone with good stability in their neck can use Mouseware. I have been using this device for about a month now. It is easy to use and doesn't strain my hand. The voice feature is amazing for navigating through various programmes. I primarily use it to type emails, respond to messages, and write my scripts.

**i** See also Factsheet on page 49.

THE STORY OF JAMES ATKINS, MENTOR TO ADAM STORMONT AT THE AICD COMPANY DIRECTOR'S COURSE

**“Being a mentor, I have learned as much as I feel I have given.”**

*Australia*

My name is James Atkins and I am the principal of the consultancy firm Vantage Strategy. I mentored Adam Stormont as part of the Directing Change Scholarship programme. Getting to know Adam, who has mental health challenges, has been about gaining an insight into who he is and the value he can contribute. His disability is very much in the background, as it should be, and our conversations have all been around where he is going and his options to get there.

Through being a mentor, I have learned as much as I feel I have given. Adam's experiences and perspectives are different from mine, which makes it a fruitful experience for us both. Adam's undertaking of the AICD Company Director's Course was a real catalyst for some interesting conversations and helped frame both what we discussed and where he is headed. It's great to see that he has found his first board role as Senior Programme Manager for Community Hospitals while completing the Directing Change programme.

(Photo: Mentor James Atkins (left) and scholar Adam Stormont.)

**i** See also Factsheet on page 18.



## THE STORY OF NADA AL-QUDSI, BENEFICIARY OF KAU'S WE "HEAR" YOU! PROGRAMME

**“The programme provided the facilitation services needed to pursue my Master’s degree in Education.”**

*Saudi Arabia*



My name is Nada Al-Qudsi. I was born deaf, and I am currently a graduate student at King Abdul-Aziz University (KAU). I was born into a hearing family, but I also have a younger deaf sister. I faced many difficulties in life and studies due to my hearing disability, but it pushed me to work towards achieving my goals. I initially faced difficulties in obtaining admission to study for a Master’s degree at KAU due to the difficulty of providing the necessary requirements for admission. I did not know anyone there, but when I heard about the deaf admissions programme, I was very pleased with the services they provided to me.

The programme helped me facilitate the admission requirements and provided the services I needed to pursue my Master’s education. My goal is to serve the deaf community in the city of Jeddah and work to spread awareness of the rights of the deaf, their culture, and their language in society. I want to continue my education at KAU and get a PhD in Information Technology. I know that the university has accepted the first deaf student in the PhD programme, and I hope to follow him.

**i** See also Factsheet on page 74.

## THE STORY OF KANEEZ FATIMA AND HER PARENTS, BENEFICIARIES OF THE KARACHI DOWN SYNDROME PROGRAMME (KDSP)

**“Her teachers say she is doing great work and ready for the next grade!”**

*Karachi, Pakistan*

When Kaneez was born my husband and I had a hard time comprehending her Down syndrome diagnosis. We didn’t have any prior knowledge about the genetic condition. We discovered KDSP as the only organization within the city catering to individuals with Down syndrome.

In the Early Preschool Experience Programme (EPEP) Kaneez learned sign language, through which she can now communicate her everyday needs to us; and she got the opportunity to connect and interact with her peers, which allowed her personality to blossom further.

The day she graduated from EPEP was a bittersweet moment for me as a parent, but I was confident that Kaneez was ready to attend the mainstream school. We were guided by KDSP throughout the process to ensure a smooth transition. Kaneez has settled in the Al Suffah mainstream school, and now studies alongside typically developing peers her age. Her confidence has grown tremendously. She is able to speak with her head held high now and is very social. Her teachers say she is doing great work and ready for the next grade!

**i** See also Factsheet on page 68.

## THE STORY OF FELIPE MELO MOSQUERA, CO-FOUNDER OF THE BIOSBOT ROBOTICS FOUNDATION

**“We learned that each member brings something valuable to the team.”**

*Colombia*

I am Felipe Melo Mosquera, a 19-year-old with Asperger’s syndrome. I struggle daily with social interactions, both in college and in social gatherings, and I often talk to myself and sometimes move my hands, following my thoughts. People around me look at me strangely, and some even make fun of me.

Everything changed when I discovered Lego robotics, and after a few years of learning these technologies I decided, with the help of some teachers from school, to form a robotics team. We learned that robotics is for everyone, and that each member brings something valuable to the team.

We participated in the First Lego League Colombia competition in 2019 and, surprisingly, we became national champions and earned a spot to represent Colombia in the international competition in Houston, Texas. In Houston we learned even more. In addition to improving my social relationships and interactions, it helped me decide that this wonderful experience, which served to increase my frustration tolerance and, above all, to make friends, could be brought to many more young people who, like me, suffer from social exclusion and bullying.

**i** See also Factsheet on page 38.

# Using gamification and mass events to train young people with disabilities in IT skills

## KAZAKHSTAN / ITEACHME COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT – ITEACHME

In 2019 the ITeachMe Foundation, based in Kazakhstan, launched the ITeachMe Competence Development Centre, aimed at people with disabilities and from socially vulnerable segments of the population. ITeachMe project has developed an innovative training methodology based on gamification and mass events, and at the end of the training participants gain a digital profession and employment. Since 2019 the foundation has established partnerships with more than 100 enterprises, and more than 90 per cent of project graduates have become successfully employed.

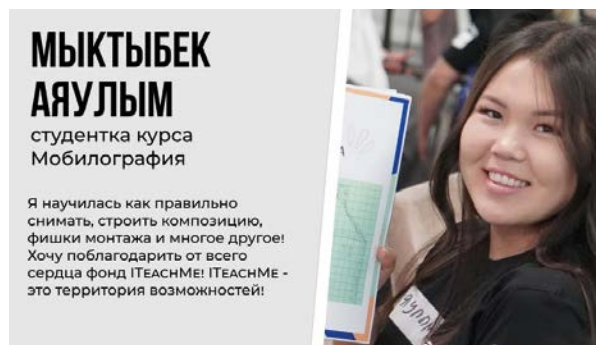
### Problem targeted

There is a lack of accessible educational and employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Kazakhstan, combined with stereotypes about disabilities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The ITeachMe project is a free training course targeting persons with disabilities, using an innovative training method. The project is organized as a series of entertaining events in which online games are the main learning tool. The goal is to teach digital skills at a level that enables participants to find employment, and the project has had a success rate of 90 per cent. Every year there is a new wave of project participants, and each year there are more applications and higher results. In 2023 the project hosted more than 50 information tours throughout Kazakhstan, and 20 'ambassadors' from all regions of the country contributed to the project's 'hip factor'.

The project is also unique in that it offers young people the opportunity to monetize their skills while still learning. This allows students to put their knowledge into practice and gain work experience by working inside the academies of the employment centre, where they will train in all stages of the career ladder – from creating a resume to passing an interview and receiving a first salary.

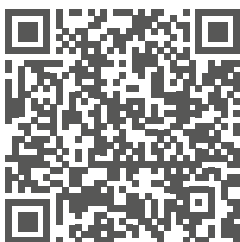


ITeachMe is a free training course for digital profession and employment in Kazakhstan.

Zakhira Begaliyeva, founder of ITeachMe, is a person with disabilities since birth, and 40 per cent of all ITeachMe employees are people with disabilities or come from other disadvantaged backgrounds.


### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The business model of the ITeachMe project is based on partnerships with educational institutions and other organizations (including for example PwC Kazakhstan or Shell Kazakhstan) to secure funding or sponsorship, as well as various donors and grantors. The ITeachMe Foundation intends to further scale the model, and it plans to develop additional sources of income, such as affiliate programmes, to ensure its long-term financial sustainability.



“Real strength lies not in the strength of the body, but in the strength of the spirit.”

Zakhira Begaliyeva, Director, ITeachMe

 Zakhira Begaliyeva  
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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- In 2023 there were 6,898 course applications.
- In addition to courses, 30 hackathons and 15 soft-skill camps were organized.
- A project related to ICT.

# Ensure inclusive early childhood care and education in refugee camps and emergencies

## KENYA – TURKANA / CBM – CBM TURKANA INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROJECT

CBM, an international development and humanitarian organization based in Germany, in collaboration with the local NGO Waldorf Kakuma Project, runs an inclusive education project in Turkana County for children with disabilities in refugee camps in a region heavily affected by drought. The project links accessible renovation, adapted learning materials, training for teachers, etc. with short-term activities that address the acute nutritional needs of children with and without disabilities. Since 2021 close to 2,000 children have been supported.

### Problem targeted

In humanitarian situations generally, and in Kenya particularly, there is a lack of infrastructure and trained staff for early childhood care and inclusive education for children with disabilities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

In Kenya's Turkana County the number of children of school age rose to about 240,000 between 1992 and 2022 due to the influx of refugees from South Sudan. CBM, a major international development agency headquartered in Germany, launched a project in 2021 with the aim of improving the quality and sustainability of inclusive education for children with disabilities among refugees in the Kakuma Camp/Kalobeyei Settlement, located in Turkana, as well as children with disabilities in the nearby host communities.

The project combines long-term inclusive education with short-term humanitarian activities that address the acute nutritional needs of children with and without disabilities. Education-related measures include accessible renovation and adaptation of facilities, provision of accessible learning materials, and sensitization of parents and caregivers.

CBM and its local partner, Waldorf Kakuma Project, trained 124 teachers in primary schools, funded by KISE, a subdivision of the Ministry of Education. Teachers are also trained on the rights of children with disabilities in education and on the prevention of



In Turkana, Kenya, an education project supports children with disabilities in refugee camps.

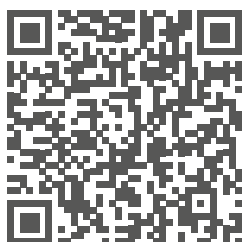
sexual abuse, among many other issues.

The training is embedded in a variety of support measures, including peer-to-peer learning and support by governmental Education Officers.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The inclusive education component of the programme has a total budget of approximately €1,374,000, with 75 per cent funded by a grant from the German Ministry BMZ. The remaining 25 per cent is a grant provided by a charitable foundation, and CBM itself provides funding, meals, and nutrition.

The project is implemented in close partnership with the Ministry of Education and regional DPOs. It is designed to be easily replicable in other refugee- and drought-affected areas. CBM itself has already used parts of the project model in a project in north Cameroon.



“Our teachers are now so much more involved in engaging, identifying, and helping children with disabilities thanks to the trainings they have received through this project.”

Joab Pemoe Egiron, Teacher



Oliver Wiegiers

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2022

- 1,230 parents and caregivers of children with disabilities were sensitised about children's rights.
- *A project of Civil Society.*



# Access to inclusive education for the equitable employment of youth with visual impairments

## KENYA / KBTA – ASSISTING THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED YOUTH OF AFRICA

Kilimanjaro Blind Trust Africa (KBTA) is a charitable trust based in Nairobi, Kenya, and operating in six countries in eastern Africa. Its work is centred on providing assistive devices to pupils and students that are using digital Braille; the provision of user training, including teachers and school technicians; and the supply of digital curriculum content and maintenance support. Between 2018 and 2023, KBTA has worked in six countries in sub-Saharan Africa and has equipped some 3,000 learners with assistive technologies.

### Problem targeted

Visually impaired African youth face tremendous barriers to quality education and employment, particularly access to digital literacy and skills.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

KBTA provides an 'end-to-end' programme for learners with visual impairments through access to digital literacy and enhancing employment skills for job opportunities. The model uses affordable, multi-functional digital Braille assistive devices that enable access to quality education. Visually impaired learners actively participate in the classrooms, with the teachers able to engage with them. The pupils are provided with the Orbit Reader 20, a device that serves as a book-reader, note-taker, and communication tool. This device eliminates the use of paper and transcribers, saves time for both teachers and students, and is cost effective.

KBTA offers comprehensive services, including user training for teachers and maintenance/repair training for school-based technicians, as well as tools, spare parts, and digital curriculum content. The trust also provides other Braille-enabled devices and training for access to STEM subjects, coding, and digital skills, enabling high school students to transition to higher education and thus have opportunities for wider career choices. To date, KBTA has reached over 1,000



KBTA uses affordable, multi-functional assistive devices to provide access to digital literacy.

teachers/school technicians and some 3,000 visually impaired learners from 250 schools and 12 tertiary institutions, all of which report improved educational outcomes while reaching higher education.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

KBTA's funding strategy combines social enterprise growth and ongoing fundraising to support the development of its programmes. The 'Diff-Ability alliance' of inclusive companies further supports employability initiatives. Furthermore, KBTA incubates African-inclusive tech start-ups focusing on human centred user testing and co-creation. This ensures sustainability and promotes inclusion by all participants, including governments.




“KBTA has empowered my dreams with the Orbit Reader, as I excel in my studies and hope for a better life.”

Emmanuel, a secondary school student

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- Between 2018 and 2023, KBTA trained 500 teacher trainers, who in turn have trained 1000+ teachers and technicians from 250 primary and 12 tertiary institutions.
- 3,000 Braille devices have been distributed, enabling learners to access digital literacy.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

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# International NGO using digital books with sign language and audio for all children

## MALAWI / WVM, MANAD – TIMWERENGE 365 DIGITAL BOOKS PROJECT

World Vision Malawi (WVM) implemented the Timwerenge 365 Digital Books Project, offering accessible digital books to support children’s literacy. Using existing digitally accessible books, including 60 with Malawian Sign Language, WVM equipped reading facilitators with devices and training to support 3,500 children, including 90+ children with print, learning, and hearing disabilities. Working with the Malawi National Association of the Deaf, in 2023 the project was extended to schools for the deaf throughout the country.

### Problem targeted

Printed books typically used in Malawi schools are not accessible to children with disabilities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Timwerenge 365 (T365) Digital Books project supplies staff and local partners, including organizations of persons with disabilities, with the content, devices, and training necessary to increase children’s literacy. The project started with existing digitally accessible books, developed by World Vision Malawi (WVM), including 60 books with Malawian Sign Language videos. The books were loaded onto SD cards, which could be inserted into digital tablets for individual use or connected to a projector for use by an entire class or reading club.

The books can be accessed via the project-provided SD cards or via apps, such as Bloom Reader, to complement printed books, and can include human narrated audio, sign language video, zoom, large font, and text highlighting. In addition, parents can access the digital books on their phones, extending reading into homes. WVM equipped reading club facilitators with the necessary devices and training to support 3,500 children, including 90+ children with various disabilities. Working with the Malawi National Association of the Deaf (MANAD), the project has been extended to seven schools for the deaf across Malawi.



The Timwerenge 365 Digital Books Project supplies children in Malawi with accessible books.

Mid-term monitoring reports showed high levels of satisfaction with the books, comfort with the devices, and increased attendance in reading clubs. In 2023, WVM and MANAD partnered in the Inclusive Education Working Group of the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

T365 Digital Books is financed by World Vision, which committed \$78,000 to the initial rollout. Going forward, the project will be integrated with WVM’s education technical programme. To improve transferability, all books are located on Bloom, a digital library, which provides easy adaptation and creation of new sign language storybooks. WVM plans to reach 10,000 children with disabilities by 2027.




“The T365 Digital Books project helps learners with disabilities access books with audio, text highlighting, and Malawian Sign Language.”

Joseph Chikoko, World Vision Malawi

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2021

- Between 2021 and 2023 some 3,500 children in three World Vision Malawi area programmes received access to 300+ digital books.
- The books are offered in the local languages Tumbuka and Chichewa and in Malawian Sign Language.
- A project of Civil Society.

 Makayiko Kayimba  
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# An app and a movement to combat gender-based violence against women with disabilities

## MEXICO / CIDIP – APP MORADA

CIDIP, a Mexican NGO, launched a programme on gender and disability in 2019 and then started the App Morada (Purple App) project in 2020. The app aims to prevent gender-based violence, particularly against women with disabilities, using a video call-hotline supported by Mexican Sign Language and that instantly connects to emergency services. Since 2020 approximately 25,000 women have used the app. In 2022 users of this app started the Purple App Movement, which now has a woman with a disability acting as spokesperson for App Morada in each of the country's 32 provinces.

### Problem targeted

According to surveys, 72.6 per cent of women with disabilities in Mexico experience violence, but are invisible to laws, public policies, and government budgets.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

App Morada was developed in 2020 with the active participation of women with different disabilities and evaluated by the women themselves in pilot groups. It is fully accessible and complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 Level AA standard, as it has a screen reader, pictograms, and easy readability, and all content is in videos in Mexican Sign Language.

The app offers targeted support for women with and without disabilities who are victims of gender-based violence. A 24/7 video call-hotline is available and supported by Mexican Sign Language, providing women with emergency numbers or directing them to the right institutions that offer help in cases of violence. For example, through the app's 'Learn about Violence' section, women can access information about what violence is, its different types and forms, laws that protect disabled women, and the rights of women with disabilities who experience violence.

Women with disabilities receive virtual and in-person workshops on deconstructing romantic love, gender-based violence, protection mechanisms, their rights, empowerment, and leadership.



App Morada offers targeted support for women who are victims of gender-based violence.

In 2020, 152 public officials were trained; in 2021 three workshops were held, with a total of 164 participants; and by 2023 the Purple App Movement had 32 speakers across Mexico. By 2023, CIDIP had started forming SORORYDISCA, a network for and by women with disabilities, strengthening their analytical skills, empowerment, and agency from a feminist perspective.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

CIDIP is financed by public funds and member contributions. The development of App Morada in 2020 was financially supported by the Secretariat for Women in Mexico City, and the 2021 update by the Institute for People with Disabilities in Mexico City.



“App Morada is a refuge for women with disabilities who experience violence.”

Irma Escalona,  
Spokesperson, App Morada



Yereli Rolander

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2020

- The number of users of App Morada App grows quickly, with 700 women joining every month between 2020 and 2023.
- 300 women with disabilities were trained about the right to a life free of violence.
- A project related to ICT.

# Building a tech infrastructure, training, and IT job creation for persons with visual impairments

## MYANMAR / LDB – TECHNOLOGY AND CAPACITY-BUILDING FOR THE BLIND

Living Dignity for the Blind, a DPO based in Myanmar, provides decentralized courses and informal training to visually impaired individuals in remote areas of the country. Users with disabilities receive online and in-person training on how to use a multitude of devices and assistive technologies. Moreover, the project enables persons with disabilities to develop mobile apps that address the unmet demand among the disabled population in Myanmar. Persons who are trained find jobs in tech-related professions, and the programme has spread out to several other regions of the country.

### Problem targeted

Persons in Myanmar who are blind are mostly excluded from the community and from employment.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Living Dignity for the Blind, established as a DPO in 2019, has developed a model of empowering persons who are visually impaired or blind, building on text-to-speech technology. The organization, which by 2023 consisted only of six persons (four of whom having a visual disability themselves), has provided extensive training in computer usage and smartphone operations for visually impaired individuals across Myanmar. It offers specialized job-skill training programmes encompassing music, audio engineering, and You-Tuber training, but also online safety, cybersecurity, and digital finance management.

To broaden access, the organization has facilitated computer room installations in rural schools for the blind, and also established the first resource room for students with visual impairments in the government university in Yangon. Living Dignity for the Blind members built a Myanmar language text-to-speech system, working with both Windows and Android systems. A fully accessible Myanmar keyboard is also being developing for the Android operating system. Persons trained found a variety of jobs, for instance, as travel ticket sellers, audio engineers, music trainers



Living Dignity for the Blind brings online and in-person training to remote areas of Myanmar.

and musicians, computer trainers, apps developers, and successful YouTubers.

The DPO also developed and launched a 'money reader' app, since in Myanmar all banknotes are the same size, and the app has recorded over 10,000 downloads since 2018.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding


Living Dignity for the Blind was funded by several international development funding entities, including the Abilis Foundation from Finland (2019, €10,000); Overbrook School's international programme in Philadelphia (2019 and 2020, a total of appx \$32,000); and the International Council for Education of Persons with Visual Impairment's higher education project (\$16,400).

By 2023 the project had been replicated in Yangon City and nine other regions of Myanmar.



“The lives of visually impaired persons are elevated and motivated for a brighter future through this programme.”

Kwai Nan Dashi, Team Leader, Living Dignity for the Blind working team

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[facebook.com/watch/enhancing.ldb/412688389630180](https://facebook.com/watch/enhancing.ldb/412688389630180)

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- 85 persons have attended online platform computer training.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# Provincial government and a foundation creating large-scale enrolment of pupils with disabilities

## NEPAL / KARUNA, PROV. GOVT. KOSHI – PREVENTION AND REHABILITATION

The Provincial Government of the Koshi province has partnered with the Karuna Foundation Nepal (KFN), a Netherlands-based foundation focusing on development support in Nepal, to carry out the Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Programme (DPRP) by training teachers, identifying out-of-school children, and improving school accessibility, among other activities. Since 2008, DPRP has built 35 accessible schools and enrolled 1,267 children with disabilities. By 2023 all schools in the Koshi province have adapted the DPRP model, and the Government of Nepal started to pilot it in other provinces as well.

### Problem targeted

In Nepal the perception exists that children with disabilities cannot be educated together with children without disabilities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

In an innovative collaboration called the Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Programme (DPRP) the Provincial Government of Nepal's Koshi province and the Karuna Foundation Nepal (KFN, the Nepalese arm of a Netherlands-based foundation) initiated a large-scale programme aimed at enrolling students with disabilities into mainstream education.

Launched in 2008, this tripartite initiative encompasses two core components: prevention and community-based rehabilitation, with education as the main driver for change. One of the programme's objectives is to provide training to teachers and school management committee members.

Beyond training, the programme takes active steps to identify children with disabilities who are not enrolled in schools, and offers counselling to parents and children to facilitate their inclusion and to organize school enrolment campaigns.

DPRP is designed to address a wide range of needs, including physical, sensory, intellectual, and developmental impairments. It emphasizes personalized support structures, but also works on the accessibility of school buildings and teaching materials.

In Koshi, Nepal, the DPRP model gives children with disabilities access to schools.



DPRP is part of a larger cooperation between KFN and regional governments.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

DRPD has developed a funding model with the Ministry of Social Development, the rural municipality, and the Karuna Foundation Nepal whereby each are responsible for a third of the cost. The education dimension amounted to €341,258 in 2022.

Koshi province policies and programmes have integrated DPRP into their regular programme as well as their developed directives and manuals so as to implement it more fully. Additionally, the Government of Nepal has allocated funds to implement the programme in two additional provinces of Nepal, namely Lumbini and Karnali.



One of the programme's core objectives is to provide training in inclusive education to teachers and school management committee members.



Yogendra Giri

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2008

- By 2023, DPRP was implemented in 112 rural municipalities, benefitting 5,143 children with disabilities through various interventions.
- A total of 475 children with severe disabilities have received home-based education.
- A project of Civil Society.



# Enhancing smartphone and tablet accessibility for individuals with visual impairments

NETHERLANDS / HABLE ONE B.V. – HABLE ONE

Hable One B.V., a start-up company based in the Netherlands, has developed the Hable One, a device that enhances smartphone and tablet accessibility for individuals with visual impairments. Easily connecting via Bluetooth, it has tactile feedback buttons and VoiceOver/TalkBack commands, allowing users to navigate and type without relying on visual cues. It is compatible with iOS and Android devices, supports multiple languages, and is portable for convenience. Between 2022 and 2023 it has already gained 2,500 active users.

## Problem targeted

For many people with visual impairments the flat touch-screen interface is difficult to use, denying access to devices such as smartphones and tablets.

## Solution, innovation, and impact

The Hable One is a portable device designed for visually impaired individuals to easily use smartphones and tablets. It weighs only 90 grams, so can be carried easily when travelling or commuting.

Connecting via Bluetooth, it features tactile buttons for easy typing and navigation. It supports VoiceOver and TalkBack commands, aiding in faster typing using Braille input, thus making it substantially easier to use the device, for instance, when travelling, during social interaction, at work, or in school.

The Hable One was developed with feedback from visually impaired individuals, with over 500 interviews conducted during its design phase, and with many organizations from several countries involved in the design, including the Netherlands, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Hable One is compatible with devices running iOS or Android, and supports Dutch, English, French, German, and Spanish, among other languages.

The company operates on a sales-driven business model, with either the user or a support organization paying for the device. By mid-2023 the pricing was around \$300 to \$350 per device.

Hable One enhances the accessibility of online devices for people with visual impairments.

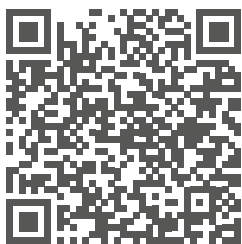


From its 2022 launch until 2023, Hable One expanded from three to 40 countries, with over 2,500 active users.

## Outlook, transferability, and funding

Hable One works with more than 50 blind or visually impaired ambassadors to guide new developments of the product, and finances its operations and growth with investors. As of 2023 the technology was available in several languages, and new ones are constantly being added.

Hable One also plans roll-outs in low-income countries.



“Being nominated for the Zero Project is more than an accolade; it is a promise to bridge digital divides.”

Freek van Welsenis,  
Co-founder, Hable One



Freek van Welsenis

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## FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2022

- In 2023, Hable One worked with 55 distributors in 40 countries worldwide.
- Surveys show that over 70 per cent of test users keep the device for further use.
- A project related to ICT.



# Transitional learning centres in rural and displaced settings for youth with disabilities

## NIGERIA / MLEY – TRANSITIONAL LEARNING CENTRES

The Maple Leaf Early Years Foundation (MLEY) is an NGO based in Nigeria providing early childhood and elementary education to children from low-income backgrounds, rural areas, and camps for internally displaced persons. By 2023, MLEY operated Transitional Learning Centres across Nigeria with a focus on technology-driven learning programmes and teacher training. The agro-vocational programme has enabled 300 youth, including those with learning and psychosocial disabilities, to learn the basics of farming and marketing their products.

### Problem targeted

Quality education for Nigerian children with physical, psychosocial, and learning disabilities is largely inaccessible for those who have been affected or displaced by conflict and climate change.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Maple Leaf Early Years Foundation is an NGO based in Nigeria that provides access to quality early childhood and primary education to children from low-income backgrounds, rural areas, and camps for internally displaced persons as well as children of the host communities through its Transitional Learning Centres.

These centres are operating in various zones across Nigeria, offering not only education but a range of other services, thus reaching members of the community. The centres run technology-driven learning programmes, teacher training, and alternative education opportunities such as an agricultural and vocational skills programme for youth aged 13 to 20 years, as well as psychosocial support activities and programmes.

Children are given the opportunity to learn life skills through practical activities such as soap making, personal hygiene, care of property and belongings, care of the environment and their immediate surroundings, proper use of the toilet, and safe use of water through the WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene) club.



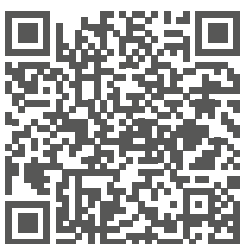
MLEY learning programmes teach children in Nigeria life skills through practical activities.

The project has grown from serving 50 beneficiaries in 2018 to over 1,000 in 2023, including youth and mothers.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Funding for the project initially came from self-financing and individual fundraising efforts, but the MLEY Foundation has since partnered with government organizations and international NGOs. By 2022 the total budget was approximately \$300,000, with more than 90 per cent coming from the government. International NGOs such as Global School Meals Coalition, INEE, and Plan International are providing non-financial support.

By 2028 the MLEY Foundation intends to facilitate the establishment of its model of Transitional Learning Centres in an additional 12 states in Nigeria.



“By providing a learning platform that is equitable, inclusive, and safe, our Transitional Learning Centres help to take the stigma of physical and psychosocial disabilities out of the equation.”

Ifedinma Nwigwe, Executive Director,  
Maple Leaf Early Years Foundation

 Ifedinma Nwigwe

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- Of the approximately 400 children in the agro-vocational training programme, about 100 have disabilities, including psychosocial disabilities.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Comprehensive ICT skills empowerment programme for disadvantaged women and girls

**NIGERIA / SAVE OUR NEEDY ORGANIZATION – PROJECT EMPOWER**

Save Our Needy Organization (SON) is a national NGO based in Lagos, supporting underprivileged girls and women. SON has launched a project empowering women and girls living in extreme poverty, with disabilities, and/or with HIV as well as survivors of gender-based violence. Participants receive free training in various skills centred around digital, entrepreneurship, and leadership skills, and they are mentored by professionals and leaders. In 2023 the project expanded to reach more than 2,000 disadvantaged females in six regions of Nigeria.

## Problem targeted

Many women and girls in Nigeria are confronted with extreme poverty, gender inequality, marginalization, unemployment, and lack of access to technology and education.

## Solution, innovation, and impact

Save Our Needy Organization (SON), a non-profit and NGO founded in 2011, runs a free ICT and digital skills training project targeting impoverished and marginalized women and girls. While the project is offered for free, a token sum is required from participants as a registration fee to ensure their commitment in completing the training sessions. The training sessions take place in mostly well-equipped training centres and online (virtual training) and last for 8–12 weeks: five sessions per week for the women's programmes, and two sessions per week for the girls' programmes. All training sessions are interactive and participatory. Participants learn graphic design, animation, website design, coding (girls), leadership, personal development, and entrepreneurship skills. The programme also aims to enable financial independence through employment or small business creation.

SON recruits skilled trainers through reputable training agencies, some of whom are people with physical disabilities. There are regular tests and evaluations after each course to ascertain the level of understanding and retention of participants.



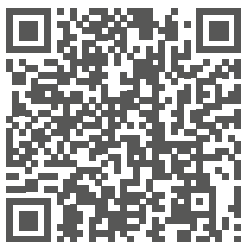
SON runs a free ICT training project for disadvantaged females in six regions of Nigeria.

SON has been able to continually increase the number of participating women and girls. Between 2020 and 2022 the overall number rose from 1,250 to 2,270 and the number of persons with disabilities from 786 to 1,378.

## Outlook, transferability, and funding

SON supports the financial independence of the women by providing six months of follow-up monitoring and evaluation for each participant who completes the training. SON is mainly financed by grants and donations, but has also other income sources such as the sales of merchandise products or renting out training equipment.

By 2028, SON plans to scale the project to empower 10,000 women and girls in Nigeria in disadvantaged communities and urban slums.



“A world with zero barriers is attainable when women and girls with disabilities are empowered without discrimination.”

Marvella Odili, Founder/CEO,  
Save Our Needy Organization



Marvella Odili

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## FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- Between 2018 and 2023 more than 6,000 women and girls have benefitted directly.
- Through online advocacy using social media, SON has reached more than 10,000 women and girls.
- A project related to ICT.

# Two programmes enabling young children with Down Syndrome to attend mainstream schools

## PAKISTAN / KDSP – EDUCATION FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DOWN SYNDROME

KDSP, a mid-sized NGO based in Karachi, created the Early Preschool Experience Programme (EPEP) and the Programme for Inclusive Education in 2017. It prepares young children with Down Syndrome and assists them in the transition to a mainstream preschool or nursery. It uses Individualized Education Plans designed to improve communication, motor, socio-emotional, and play skills, among others. EPEP supported seven children in 2017, growing to 25 in 2022; and the number of children in mainstream schools grew from nine in 2017 to more than 80 in 2023.

### Problem targeted

To enable children with Down Syndrome to attend a mainstream school they need preparation and support.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

KDSP has launched two programmes to prepare children with Down Syndrome for life in a mainstream school and to support them and their families in entering one. KDSP is the only organization in Pakistan catering to the early educational journey of these children.

The Early Preschool Experience Programme (EPEP) is a school-readiness programme that enrolls children aged one and half to three years to develop their social, cognitive, and physical skills. Children receive age-appropriate Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) that focus on learning objectives in areas such as communication/language, fine and gross motor skills, socio-emotional skills, perception/play, and self-help skills. They are then implemented in a school-specific routine to prepare children for the classroom. Parents are also empowered through training and engagement sessions.

After a child has been enrolled for one year in EPEP, parents are informed and guided about schooling options and become part of the Programme for Inclusive Education (PIE). Schools are supported through PIE with awareness sessions, and training for teachers and facilitators is provided as well.



EPEP prepares children with Down Syndrome to attend a mainstream school in Pakistan.

After an initial reluctance to enrol children with Down Syndrome in mainstream schools, there has been significant growth between 2017 and 2022. In 2022 there were 69 children in mainstream schools supported by PIE, and over 80 in 2023.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding


KDSP's services for individuals with Down Syndrome are sustained through donors, grants, and partnerships. Additionally, some limited financial support comes from the services fees that families pay. These services are tailored to each child's age and needs, with costs either highly subsidized or entirely free, based on the family's financial situation.

In all, 95 per cent of individuals with Down Syndrome are receiving some form of financial support when availing services at KDSP.



“The peace of mind I experience knowing that my child is in a nurturing environment where she thrives is beyond words.”

Um e Rubab,  
parent of an EPEP student

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2017

- PIE has seen an increase from nine children in 2017 to 80+ children in 2023.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Crisis-resilient education for children with disabilities in Palestine

## PALESTINE / ASDC, CBM – INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE GAZA STRIP

Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children (ASDC), a Palestine-based NGO, has implemented an EU-funded project that focuses on the provision of education in times of crisis and emergencies. Partnering with CBM Christoffel-Blindenmission, an international development agency headquartered in Germany, ASDC has produced video lectures and online classes equipped with sign language and easy language, delivered through hybrid and blended e-learning methodologies. Between 2018 and 2023, ASDC supported more than 800 children with disabilities in mainstream schools and trained 400 teachers, other DPOs, and members of the Ministry of Education.

### Problem targeted

Children with disabilities and their parents in Palestine know too little about their rights and still face discrimination when it comes to accessing education and health care.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Since 1992 the Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children (ASDC) has been supporting people with hearing disabilities through education, rehabilitation, training, and livelihood opportunities. The organization supports more than 40,000 people every year with a variety of rights-based and inclusive approaches.

In 2018, in collaboration with CBM Christoffel-Blindenmission, an international development agency headquartered in Germany, ASDC implemented the project 'Developing an inclusive educational environment for children with and without disabilities in the Gaza Strip'. The project primarily aims to ensure continuous education for young people with disabilities in the region, even in times of conflict. To this end, ASDC produces video lectures and online courses equipped with sign language and easy language, delivered through hybrid and blended e-learning methods. In addition, teachers are trained to create materials themselves and to deliver online lessons/virtual interventions.

Furthermore, mainstream and specialist teachers, therapists, and parents are supported to improve their



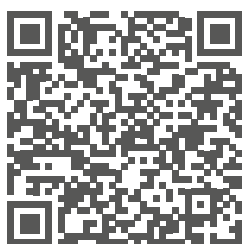
ASDC ensures access to education for children with disabilities and their parents in Palestine.

skills in assisting the pupils. The project is also about education services provided by other DPOs and NGOs in Palestine, and strengthening their capacities and role in society.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Initial funding from CBM was used to develop inclusive education models in Atfaluna School and public schools in Gaza. With more funding from the World Bank the model was expanded, and later ASDC also started e-learning programmes with EU funding.

ASDC has already been replicated by other organizations within Gaza, and it plans to expand its digital library and collaboration with the Ministry of Education on a government framework for inclusive education in the coming years.



ASDC produces video lectures and online courses equipped with sign language and easy language.

 **Sian Tesni**  
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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- Some 1,000 school principals, teachers, counsellors, and parents have been sensitized to support children with disabilities both in education and health issues.
- *A project of Civil Society.*



# Providing hearing and seeing aids paired with inclusive education in refugee camps

## PALESTINE / PCCDS – SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The PCCDS, a local NGO based in the city of Hebron, runs a programme specialized in improving the educational outcomes of students with hearing and visual disabilities in schools located in 19 refugee camps run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). From 2021 to 2023 doctors examined some 1,900 male and female students, and subsequently provided hearing aids to 211 students and glasses to 743 students. Jointly with inclusive education curricula, the completion rates among those students increased from 27 to 59 per cent.

### Problem targeted

Young people with hearing and visual disabilities in refugee camp schools in the West Bank receive poor education, if at all. Public policies to improve the situation are non-existent.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

In the 64 UNRWA refugee camps in the West Bank, the Palestinian Centre for Communication and Development Policies has initiated a programme aimed at improving the educational outcomes of students with hearing and visual disabilities. Between 2021 and 2023 the programme conducted medical examinations of approximately 1,900 students. Children also attend a year-long educational programme with qualified teachers trained in inclusive education and utilizing play and emotional education. In addition, counsellors in the UNRWA camps are trained as well.

Students with hearing and visual disabilities are taught in special education courses and then are comprehensively integrated into the regular school community. Some deaf students have been transferred to a school specializing in educating the deaf, and some students with visual disabilities have been transferred to a school for the blind.

By the end of the first semester of 2023 the completion rate increased from 27 per cent to 59 per cent. IN 2023, PCCDS built two new community



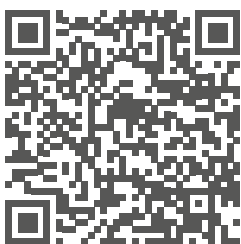
PCCDS supports students with hearing or visual impairments in West Bank refugee camps.

gardens, one in Balata camp and one in Jalazoun. These gardens are used in the process of learning through play as part of a project to improve achievement among students with hearing and visual disabilities.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The programme is mainly funded by the Al-Medad Foundation, based in the United Kingdom, with approximately \$100,000, and it received approximately €12,000 in funding and in-kind contributions from within Palestine.

UNRWA is providing teachers and teacher training, and the Consulate General of France provided the space for education and play.



“The project targets one of the most important marginalized segments of the refugee community.”

Jaafar Al-Titi, Director of Education, UNRWA schools, southern West Bank region



Jamil Derbashi

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2021

- The rate of student integration into school and society increased from 16 to 72 per cent.
- A project of Civil Society.



# An online tool for country accountability on human rights and disability inclusion

## PARAGUAY / FUNDACION SARAKI – IN DASHBOARD

The IN Dashboard is a web portal developed by Fundación Saraki, a Paraguayan NGO dedicated to innovations supporting the economic inclusion of persons with disabilities as well as a rights-based approach to improve public policy. The dashboard was built to collect and analyse data from official government reports and alternative reports of civil society. It publishes the data, tracks the status of progress, and follows up on recommendations made to various countries. In July 2023, 19+ countries in Latin America had uploaded their country reports.

### Problem targeted

OPDs, civil society in general, and even governments and treaty bodies (e.g., the UN, OAS, and others) lack access to information on the existence, coverage, and quality of disability inclusion data.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The IN Dashboard was created in 2021 to be a comprehensive platform for collecting, analysing, and publishing both quantitative and qualitative human rights data. It was initially adopted by OPD allies in eight countries in Latin America. Beginning in 2023, the Organization of American States Disability Convention (OAS-CIADDIS) adopted the platform for its official use in 19 countries.

In 2023 the Committee of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) piloted the platform in its two sessions with ten countries. The IN Dashboard is improving transparency and accountability by tracking human rights commitments and facilitating evidence-based dialogue among policy makers, civil advocates, and rights holders. Information is collected through existing reporting mechanisms, so states and treaty bodies are provided with an online tool that makes their reporting work more efficient.

For OAS-CIADDIS, the IN Dashboard hosts the Regional Disability Observatory; for the CRPD, it



IN Dashboard is a platform for collecting, analysing, and publishing human rights data.

connects official state reports with alternative reports from OPDs and other key stakeholders.

OPDs in Argentina, Paraguay, Peru, and other countries have strengthened their ability to demonstrate inconsistencies and data gaps, contrasting official reports and their own accounts, and helping experts in improving their recommendations to OAS Member States.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The IN Dashboard is managed by the Saraki Foundation and is funded by the US Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, with contributions from the Organization of American States.

The IN Dashboard may grow to more than ten OAS Member States and help to further ten UN Human Rights treaties, as well as other regions' treaties, as the software was built in a format adaptable to any convention or language.



“The IN Dashboard is a repository of all the information we collect in each reporting cycle.”

Mercedes Carrillo, Legal Officer of the Department of Social Inclusion, Organization of American States

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2021

- In 2023 the UN-CRPD Committee uploaded official and alternative reports for ten countries, and the OAS-CIADDIS disability convention adopted its use for 19 signatory countries.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# Training family groups in remote Amazon villages to use sign language and to replicate it

## PERU – AMAZONIA / PAZ Y ESPERANZA – PERUVIAN SIGN LANGUAGE

In 2012 the Asociación Ministerio Diaconal Paz y Esperanza, a Peruvian NGO, originated a course to teach Peruvian Sign Language as the first language and written Spanish as the second language to families with deaf children in Nueva Cajamarca, a village in the Amazon rainforest region. The courses take place three times a week and cover topics from basic sign language to communicating in daily situations as well academic disciplines such as mathematics, geography, and history. The courses also develop an understanding of deaf culture for the students and their families.

### Problem targeted

In remote regions of Peru the lack of bilingual schools for children who are deaf or hard of hearing prevents them from exercising their basic rights, such as learning, working, and socializing.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Founded in Peru in 1996, Paz y Esperanza is a human rights organization inspired by Christian principles and values. Since then it has evolved into a community of independent organizations in Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador, with sister organizations in the United States and United Kingdom.

Paz y Esperanza's work focuses on people living in extreme poverty and/or affected by violence and injustice, especially children, women, and people with disabilities. In 2020 the organization launched a project in the San Martin region of the Amazon to provide deaf children the opportunity to learn Peruvian Sign Language as a first language and Spanish as a second language.

The process was initiated by enlisting a deaf community from the Peruvian coast to share their experiences in the Amazon. The 40-minute classes take place three times a week using a curriculum based on the experience of Peru's Beethoven School for the Deaf. Starting with four families, the group of participants grew to more than 50 families.

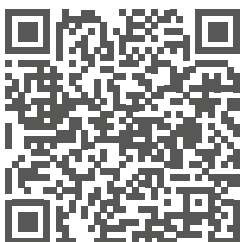


In San Martin children who are deaf or hard of hearing learn Peruvian Sign Language as a first language.

As the area has a migrant population, the number of deaf people who have gone through the learning process has increased to more than 150 since 2020. In 2023 the project had 60 participants, including both children and adults.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The low-cost service is funded by families, local communities, and the education sector. A local community, once established, should then take over to lead further expansion and replication in other places. In this way the project will reach other less accessible areas in Peru, such as the Andes and other areas of the Amazon.



“Through the learning of sign language, the communicative skills and competencies of deaf people have been strengthened.”

Leonor Milagros Sovero Habich,  
Director of Disability Programmes, Paz y Esperanza

 Leonor Sovero

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2012

- From 2020 to 2023 the number of children and adults learning and using Peruvian Sign Language through the project grew to 150.
- In 2023 the project had 60 participants, both children and adults.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# A case manager coordinating early intervention support from three ministries

## PORTUGAL / CECD – NATIONAL SYSTEM OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INTERVENTION

The Cooperative for Inclusion (CECD), a local NGO based in the city of Cacém, has been providing inclusive early childhood intervention since 2009. The CECD model is based on case managers who coordinate the early childhood interventions (ECI) of three ministries – Education, Health, and Labour and Social Services – substantially improving the access of families to ECI support systems. In 2021, 154 case managers reached almost 80,000 people, including children and their families.

### Problem targeted

The need of support for children with disabilities from zero to six years and their families is increasing, as it is often difficult for families to cope with multiple authorities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Portuguese ECI model integrates all professionals into local teams. The Cooperative for Inclusion has developed a system of case managers representing three Portuguese ministries that provide services in ECI, which in turn provides families with a single point of contact and a single plan of intervention in which all stakeholders play their part in achieving the goals and priorities as defined by the families themselves. The CECD case managers help to connect the family to required inclusive special education, therapies, financial assistance, respite care, and other services. If a family moves, a different local team initiates the support following the ECI plan and adapting it, if necessary, without the need of reinitiating the process and never losing track of children in need of support. The case manager model increases the level of trust and disclosure by families to the ECI professional.

The system has also doubled the number of families being supported with the same budget, since ministries have combined their resources. It has also allowed for earlier detection of children at risk and



In Portugal the CECD model facilitates families' access to early childhood interventions.

increased expertise levels for the interministerial teams. By mid-2023, 154 local ECI teams operated across Portugal.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Each ministry funds their professionals in local ECI teams. CECD itself is directly funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Services with €150,000 annually, which finances five professionals for the local ECI teams, and each local team supports 360 children and their families.

The European Association on Early Childhood Intervention has recommended the CECD model as a good practice and is seeking European partners to replicate it.



“My intervention as a case-manager is understanding families, their priorities, and putting my knowledge at their disposal.”

Teresa Carvalho, ECI Professional and Speech Therapist, CECD

 Miguel Valles

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2009

- In 2021 there were 154 teams reaching almost 80,000 people in the country, including children and their families.
- By combining resources, the ministries managed to double the capacity of children supported.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# Inclusion of deaf students in higher education

## SAUDI ARABIA / KING ABDULAZIZ UNIVERSITY – WE “HEAR” YOU!

King Abdulaziz University (KAU), based in Jeddah, developed the project We ‘Hear’ You! to improve the Arabic language skills of deaf and hard of hearing students wishing to enrol in KAU. Started in 2018, the intensive language programme provides students with accessible study materials, lasts for up to two years, and ends with a comprehensive test. Between 2018 and 2023 the admission of deaf and hard of hearing students has grown from 18 to 100 within the programmes of fashion design and digital media.

### Problem targeted

Deaf students experience very poor language preparation skills at most regular schools, thus hindering their chance for university admission.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

KAU has established We “Hear” You!, a preparatory year for students who are deaf or hard of hearing to promote their Arabic language skills, from elementary school level to a university level in one year.

The programme consists of an intensive language preparation, preparation for the university environment to accommodate the culture of people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and additional support services such as sign language interpreters. From 2018 to 2023 more than 100 deaf and hard of hearing students were admitted to KAU. Fifteen sign language interpreters provide their services, and Saudi Sign Language has been adopted as a language for the deaf in the university system at King Abdulaziz University.

The preparations to accept deaf students took three years of planning. KAU started by hiring qualified persons in deaf education. Several committees were formed to research specific aspects such as students’ background, acceptance criteria, textbooks, and university environment. For example, KAU has created 13 textbooks for the intensive Arabic language curriculum.

Students were able to study in the field of fashion design, and the first group graduated in the summer of 2023. In 2023, KAU has started another



We ‘Hear’ You enables students who are deaf or hard of hearing to reach university level in Arabic.

specialization in Digital Media and plans to add new specializations every two to three years.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding


KAU is a public university funded by the government, and all funding for the programme is provided by the Ministry of Education. Students with disabilities receive a monthly allowance from the government to encourage them to pursue higher education and not to depend on social services.

KAU is considered a leading university in disability inclusion in the Middle East and North Africa region, and its innovations are often reviewed by other universities. Following the KAU model, Taibah University, Madinah, also in Saudi Arabia, scaled the programme earlier in 2023.



“We are working hard to make KAU accessible for everyone.”

Prof. Hana Abdullah Al- Nuaim,  
President, King Abdulaziz University

 Dr. Wajdi Wazzan  
kau.edu.sa, @kauweb, @thewazzan

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- Since 2018 more than 100 deaf and hard of hearing students have been admitted to KAU.
- 15 sign language interpreters provide their services at the university.
- A project of Civil Society.



# Company- and volunteer-based vocational training model for creating inclusive ICT-jobs

## SPAIN / FUNDACIÓN GOODJOB – #IMPACT

Fundación GoodJob, a Spanish foundation supporting the labour inclusion of persons with disabilities, launched the #IMPACT training programme in 2020, providing technological and vocational skills training online to persons with disabilities. The trainings are supported by companies and accompanied by volunteer trainers, tutors, and mentors. By the end of 2022 a total of 518 people had participated in 14 trainings, and they went on to achieve an employment rate of more than 70 per cent.

### Problem targeted

People with disabilities lack opportunities to learn occupations that are in demand and that offer them chances for secure and well-paid jobs.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The online #IMPACT training programme is free for people with disabilities and/or at risk of exclusion to develop skills in the technology sector, independent of location and without the need for prior knowledge or experience in the IT sector.

A special feature is that companies and volunteers support the courses as teachers, tutors, and mentors. After completing vocational and technical training, participants are prepared to integrate into companies, initially with the support of Fundación GoodJob and its own employment centres, and through supported employment with specialized job coaches whose aim is to integrate the participants directly into the workforce.

#IMPACT ensures that people with disabilities acquire vocational skills that are of high value in the market. At the same time, the programme supports companies in fulfilling their legal obligation to employ people with disabilities.

#IMPACT was launched in 2020 with 41 participating students, 10 cooperating companies, and 78 employees who volunteered to support the project. The programme has already been supported by 35 companies and more than 540 volunteers.



GoodJob provides people with disabilities with free online training in technology and careers.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

About 80 per cent of the costs of the #IMPACT programmes are covered by companies interested in employing people with disabilities, with 20 per cent coming from private donations and public grants.

Working with volunteers who support the project as teachers, tutors, and mentors has proven to be efficient and cost-effective. It can be seen as a benchmark model how to engage with volunteers working with companies in the IT sector, and Fundación GoodJob aims to expand the cooperation model to 100 companies in the near future.



Thanks to the #IMPACT programme people with disabilities can work in the technology sector.

César López, General Director,  
Fundación GoodJob



Beatriz Dueñas

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2020

- In 2022 the #IMPACT programme had more than 518 participants in 14 courses, of whom 30 per cent were women.
- The training completion rate was 83 per cent and the job placement rate was more than 70 per cent.
- In 2023 the programme was supported by 35 companies and more than 540 volunteers.
- *A project of Civil Society.*



# A programme to improve employability of people with disabilities in the digital sector

## SPAIN / FUNDACIÓN ONCE – POR TALENTO DIGITAL

Fundación ONCE, a large Spanish foundation, created the training programme Por Talento Digital to improve the employability of persons with disabilities in the digital and technological field. The programme offers in-person, online, and hybrid training options on basic digital skills, upskilling courses, and highly specialized training (e.g., programming, Big Data, cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence). Between 2019 and 2023, Por Talento Digital has trained nearly 21,000 persons with disabilities, and offered a choice of 887 courses.

### Problem targeted

In Spain only one in four persons with disabilities are employed, and often in low-skilled jobs.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Fundación ONCE is a leading disability organization in Spain. Since 2019 the foundation has been running the Por Talento Digital training programme with the aim of improving the employability and competitiveness of people with disabilities in the digital and technological field.

The programme covers the entire process, from recruitment to training to job placement, and has entered into partnerships with employers. Por Talento Digital is aimed at people regardless of the type and severity of their disability, age, level of education, professional background, or digital and technological skills. It offers a wide range of options, from basic digital skills to continuing education courses and highly specialized training.

The courses are offered in person, online, and hybrid. In Madrid a flagship training centre has been set up, which is fully accessible and equipped with the latest technology. Participation in the training courses is free of charge. For in-person trainings, participants receive a daily allowance to cover extra expenses. In addition, individual grants are available for Master's degree courses, specializations, and certifications.



Por Talento Digital opens up career opportunities in the digital and technological sector.

In 2022, 887 courses were offered and 5,558 students completed the training. Since its creation in 2019, the programme has trained nearly 21,000 persons with disabilities.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The Por Talento Digital programme is financed through a combination of sources, including the European Social Fund, self-financing, and donations.

The training model can be replicated, although it requires significant financial resources. In the coming years the organization aims to expand its reach, increase employment rates, and build new training centres in several regions in Spain.



“These courses help the employability of a person with a disability to multiply exponentially.”

Daniel, a Por Talento Digital student



Ana Juvino

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- Between 2020 and 2022 the number of trained persons grew from 3,867 to 5,558.
- 48 per cent of all trainees were women.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Eye-tracking device for persons with severe disabilities enabling them to communicate

SPAIN / IRISBOND – HIRU

IRISBOND, a medium-sized private company based in Spain, has developed an eye-tracking device called Hiru that enables non-verbal individuals with conditions such as cerebral palsy to communicate using their eyes. This technology allows them to actively participate in society by attending school, working, and engaging with others. The device consists of cameras that track the user's eyes, allowing them to select and operate different computer applications. Hiru is compatible with Windows and Apple iPad operating systems and had over 7,000 users worldwide in 2022.

## Problem targeted

Persons with severe limitations in their upper body, their hands, or their speech cannot use computer or smartphone technology.

## Solution, innovation, and impact

In 2013, IRISBOND developed an eye-tracking device that allows people with different conditions to communicate verbally with their eyes. It supports persons with ALS, cerebral palsy, or Rett syndrome, among other conditions. Cameras detect and follow the eyes of the user, and the user can then select and operate different applications on a computer. The IRISBOND eye-tracker is designed to accompany the user, many of them using wheelchairs. It is lightweight, has a protective case, and can be attached to the user's tablet at the necessary angle. It also has precise anchors to hold the wheelchair in place.

In 2022, IRISBOND launched Hiru, which works both with Windows systems and on Apple iPads, enabling users now to freely choose the operating system and the device they prefer to use. By 2023 some 4,000 Hiru units had been sold. There are many applications available for Hiru, including desktop control applications, communication apps, learning apps, and many more to come.

At a global level, IRISBOND has an expert test programme, the IRISBOND Community Programme,

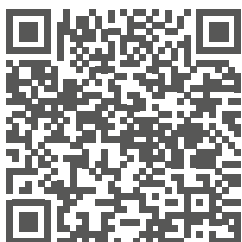


Hiru enables non-verbal individuals to communicate using their eyes.

and volunteer augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) opinion leaders use its products and provide quality feedback.

## Outlook, transferability, and funding

IRISBOND is a for-profit company that is financed through sales and investment partners. It sells complete AAC devices and systems in two main ways: through distributors, mostly Argentina, France, the United States, and the United Kingdom; and directly in Spain, where the public health system finances its purchase. IRISBOND has plans to enter the Asian markets in 2023.



Hiru works both with Windows systems and on Apple iPads.

 Eduardo Jauregui  
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## FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2013

- In Spain the public health system finances IRISBOND purchases 100 per cent.
- By 2023 some 4,000 of the company's Hiru units had been sold.
- A project related to ICT.

# European university alliance fostering inclusion by sharing tools and good practices

## SPAIN / UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA AND OTHERS – CHARM-EU ALLIANCE

CHARM-EU Alliance aims to promote mobility, inclusiveness, and competitiveness in the area of European higher education. Among its complex mission, it focuses on creating an inclusive environment and removing barriers for students, participatory processes, staff training, reasonable accommodation, assistive technology, curricula, change of culture, and more. Many tools, such as curricula design and admission policies, have been created and provided free of charge so as to benefit students, staff, and stakeholders globally.

### Problem targeted

Many people, including persons with disabilities, face structural barriers and discrimination to access and participate in higher education.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

CHARM-EU was initiated in 2019 by the University of Barcelona, Trinity College Dublin, Utrecht University, Eötvös Loránd University, and University of Montpellier to pilot a new inter-European university. Aligned with the Global European Values and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the new CHARM-EU has been created as a test model and seeks to become a leading example of good practice to foster mobility, inclusiveness, quality, and competitiveness across higher education in Europe.

CHARM-EU also offers a Master's degree, with students being part of the co-creation and innovation process. Students attend lectures in one of the five CHARM-EU partner universities and connect online to the other campuses over the 18 months of the Master's programme.

The curriculum tool, for instance, features a teaching and learning strategy handbook, an assessment handbook, content guidelines, a curriculum design blueprint, and a sustainability guidebook. Inclusivity tools contain the key findings of an inclusion survey, a collection of good practices, an inclusivity plan, as well as inclusivity tips for educators.



### Programme Content Guidelines

ACCESS RESOURCE



### Curriculum Design Blueprint

ACCESS RESOURCE

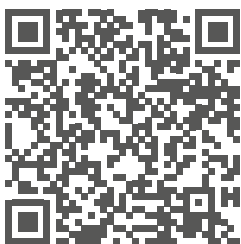
CHARM-EU is a pilot project for an inter-European university for inclusive higher education.

All toolkits are freely available to download in six languages. By 2023 the CHARM-EU Alliance had some 500 individuals involved across the nine partner universities.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

CHARM-EU is funded by an Erasmus+ Grant from the EU. In 2023, CHARM-EU is a consortium consisting of eight countries, including nine public higher education institutions: the University of Barcelona, Trinity College Dublin, Utrecht University, Eötvös Loránd University, the University of Montpellier, Åbo Akademi University, Julius-Maximilians University Würzburg and Hochschule Ruhr West, and Bergen University.

The consortium is designed to share practices that can be replicated as easily as possible by its member universities and by universities globally.



“Inclusion is a step-by-step journey that requires everyone to reduce structural barriers so as to create an inclusive university model.”

Ágnes Sarolta Fazekas-Vinkovits,  
CHARM-EU Inclusiveness Leader and  
Assistant Professor, Eötvös Loránd University

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- Between 2019 and 2022 the number of participating European universities increased from five to seven. In 2023 the number of participating EU countries increased from seven to nine.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# UNICEF-based technology project supporting young people with communication impairments

## SWITZERLAND / UNICEF – GIVING VOICE TO EVERY CHILD

UNICEF initiated and funded the Giving Voice to Every Child project in south-east Europe, supporting young children with communication impairments. The project utilizes Cboard, a free Augmentative and Alternative Communication web application for children and adults with speech and language impairments, and integrates a global symbols database with over 20,000 symbols. It also empowers professionals and parents for effective intervention. The programme, which has been launched in Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, has directly benefited more than 3,000 children since 2019.

### Problem targeted

Some children face communication challenges due to impairments or trauma, requiring timely intervention for positive outcomes. Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems have high potential to support young children with communication difficulties. However, AAC systems, especially in local languages, are not often available or are even unknown.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Cboard is a free, open-source communication tool with over 20,000 symbols, available on Android, iOS, and web browsers in 40+ languages designed to assist persons with communication impairments.

UNICEF has been supporting Cboard since 2017. Building on Cboard, UNICEF launched a new programme called Giving Voice to Every Child in 2019. To promote its usage the organization financed training programmes for professionals, using both in-person and online methods. Children with communication difficulties are identified and supported in early interventions centres, preschools, the resource centres supporting inclusive education, primary schools, through parents of children with disabilities, and through day-care centres for children with disabilities.

The effectiveness of the Cboard was measured with questionnaires and has shown a remarkable degree of achievement at all levels of children's competency, self-esteem, and adaptability.



Cboard is a free open-source tool for persons with communication impairments.

Originating in Croatia, Montenegro, and Serbia, the programme expanded to Bulgaria and North Macedonia in 2021–2022 and to more than 1,000 professionals across five countries. Currently, more than 3,000 young people in south-east Europe are using Cboard.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

UNICEF estimates that approximately 840,000 children in Europe and Central Asia could benefit from the implementation of AAC solutions such as Cboard. UNICEF funded the initial development and customization in the region.

The existing model to regionalize Cboard can easily be replicated in other countries and languages, based on the availability of partners and funding.



“She is so happy when she is able to say something, when she expresses any emotion.”

Ivana, whose daughter started talking at the age of 4 after using Cboard for six months

 Saurabh Agarwal  
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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- Early introduction of AAC can significantly improve a child's communication skills and social interaction.
- A project related to ICT.



# Empowering youth through storytelling and digital media in sub-Saharan Africa

## TANZANIA / TAI TANZANIA – PAMOJA (INCLUSIVE) PROJECT

Tai Tanzania is a creative Tanzanian NGO providing non-formal education to youth and persons with disabilities since 2013. It uses digital media, storytelling, and technology to produce educational content in the form of animations, comics, and radio drama. Collaborating with radio and TV stations as well as other NGOs, Tai Tanzania addresses issues such as albinism, autism, and blindness, and it disseminates the content throughout the country and beyond. The programmes are also shared on YouTube and used in school classes.

### Problem targeted

Children with disabilities are often marginalized and excluded from education and high-quality content, especially in remote areas.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Tai uses the power of storytelling and technology to create educational content, including animations, comics, and radio dramas. Its approach involves various stakeholders, especially young people and those with disabilities.

Started in 2020, it addresses such conditions as albinism, blindness, dyslexia, and physical disabilities, with a particular focus on autism. All content is available online and disseminated through school and community outreach programmes.

On the website a variety of animations is readily available as YouTube videos, radio dramas are freely shared via the Soundcloud system, comics can be downloaded, and online games can be played. A set of diverse characters appear on the website, such as Njaro, an energetic young innovator with albinism, and Nemo, a blind student who is very talented in mathematics.

Through school outreach initiatives over 4,000 young people have been reached since 2020. In addition, millions of viewers and listeners can access the materials through digital channels, television, and



Tai creates a variety of non-formal education content for people with disabilities in Tanzania.

radio, and 70 per cent of the audience has reported that they have gained new insights from the content.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Tai's funding model is built on a variety of sources, including grants from international entities such as diplomatic missions, private foundations, and UN agencies.

The organization is seeking to expand by producing additional animations and crafting similar narratives in the form of comic books and radio drama. The content, once produced, is available at no cost to other non-profit organizations.



“Through this animation I have learned to love and value people with special needs.”

Firdausi, a student in Magomeni Secondary School, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania



Ian Tarimo

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2013

- More than 4,000 students have been reached through school outreach activities since 2020.
- There have been more than 100,000 views on YouTube and 4 million views through television and community radio stations.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Training students to become leaders and innovators in accessibility and inclusion

## TURKEY / DEĞİŞTİREN ADIMLAR DERNEĞİ (DADER) – CAMPUS OF COLOURS

Değiştiren Adımlar Derneği (DADER), an NGO based in Istanbul, runs the nationwide Campus of Colours programme, which aims to raise socially responsible leaders among high school and university students, both with and without disabilities. Campus of Colours teaches various skills focused on diversity and inclusion. More than 400 participants took part between 2015 and 2023, of whom 35 per cent have a disability and 60 per cent are female. Projects of Campus of Colours graduates have won numerous awards.

### Problem targeted

Turkey's young people with disabilities lack equal access to educational programmes for future leaders and entrepreneurs.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Campus of Colours is a free educational programme run by Değiştiren Adımlar Derneği (DADER) – an NGO based in Turkey – to raise socially responsible leaders and social impact entrepreneurs among students with and without disabilities.

The programme consists of about 20 modules focusing on social awareness, personal development, career preparation, social value creation, and leadership skills. Mentors and experts support the programme participants. There are similar programmes for young people in Turkey, but none of them include participants with disabilities and from other diverse backgrounds.

Graduates form alumni groups who volunteer to mentor trainees, team members and DADER board members. As of 2023 more than 100 DADER members and alumni were organized as Campus of Colours volunteers.

The programme is currently active in 25 universities and 45 high schools and has worked with 30+ NGOs and 25 sponsor companies. A 2020 social



Campus of Colours trains students to become socially responsible leaders and entrepreneurs.

impact analysis among alumni confirmed that 83 per cent engaged with the NGO space after graduating, and 55 per cent benefitted from the career support.

Many accessibility and inclusion projects have been founded by graduates of Campus of Colours, for instance, BlindLook and Erisilebilir Her Sey (Accessible All Things).

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Campus of Colours is funded through donations, corporate sponsorships, and fundraising events, with a network of graduates and volunteers supporting its work.

The programme aims to expand from 13 cities in 2023 to at least 25 in the medium term.



“A volunteering programme fostering civil society culture, with diverse perspectives, is a great asset.”

Bariş Oktay, Campus of Colours graduate and a DADER volunteer



Ms. Elif Cansu Gayretli

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2015

- Campus of Colours is working with 100+ alumni and others as volunteers.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Accessible education systems with audio and tactile inclusive materials

## TURKEY / RAHMI YESILSOY CENTRE - ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION SYSTEMS

Bergama Belediyesi Rahmi Yeşilsoy Engelliler Merkezi, a disability centre affiliated with its local municipality and located in western Turkey, produces tactile educational and game materials for children with visual impairments. The materials combine different textures, Braille writings, and audio signals activated by touch. Since 2018 the materials have been used in schools by some 3,000 students and teachers across Turkey, as well as more than 2,000 in nine countries in Africa and 600 in Pakistan.

### Problem targeted

The scarcity of materials catering to the educational and recreational needs of persons with visual impairments has been a constant challenge.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Bergama Belediyesi Rahmi Yeşilsoy Engelliler Merkezi, a municipal-affiliated disability centre in western Turkey, focuses on the development of educational materials, tactile mind games, and inclusive toys specifically designed to cater to the learning needs of visually impaired individuals. The centre has developed a low-cost material whose texture and surfaces can be easily adapted, enabling visually impaired individuals to use their tactile sense.

Magnetic buttons beneath these textures trigger audio signals upon touch, enhancing comprehension. Braille writings further contribute to accessibility. This project has also facilitated the inclusion of sighted and visually impaired children within the same educational framework, enabling collaborative learning experiences from an early age.

After starting a social responsibility project in 2019, the organization took the tactile materials, tactile toys, and white canes to visually impaired children in various countries of the world.

In 2019, 1,500 visually impaired children were trained in Burundi, Rwanda, and Sudan, and in 2023 some 800 children in Uganda were equipped with the



By 2023 the tactile educational and game materials had been used in eleven countries.

materials. With the growing number of new materials, production has been upgraded from hand-made to 3D-printing. In workshops called Inclusive Accessible Modelling interested parties can also learn how to produce those materials themselves.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The Bergama Disability Centre is a non-profit organization, using a building donated by a philanthropist. Based on a contract signed between Bergama Municipality and Bergama District Directorate of National Education, all expenses required for the workshop are met from the revenues of Bergama Municipality.

Donations are made to workshops by philanthropists, who also donate raw materials and white walking stick needed for the materials produced. This enables the centre to share all its materials for free and to provide all trainings and workshops also free of charge.



“They work to make life equal, accessible, and barrier-free for all children around the world.”

Hakan Koştu,  
Mayor, Bergama Municipality



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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- Over 8,000 educational materials and tactile intelligence games were produced in 2023.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Creating online-courses to support people with disabilities` professional development

## UKRAINE / CSR UKRAINE – CAREER HUB PRO: FREELANCE

CSR Ukraine, a public organization conducting corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects, has set up Career Hub Pro: Freelance, a series of online training courses helping young persons with diverse disabilities to develop their career in copywriting, graphic design, or video editing and to become self-employed. Two training programmes were organized in spring and summer 2023, with 150+ young people trained inside Ukraine as well as Ukrainian refugees outside the country. Two thirds of the participants confirmed that they received paid contracts after attending the courses.

### Problem targeted

In Ukraine the unemployment rate for people with disabilities is estimated at close to 80 per cent, and the situation has worsened as a result of the ongoing war.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Career Hub Pro: Freelance is a series of online courses that caters specifically to young individuals with disabilities, aiming to bridge the employment gap in Ukraine. The courses offer specialized training in three distinct areas: copywriting, graphic design, and video editing.

Recognizing the diverse needs of its participants, the courses incorporate several inclusive measures. To ensure that the content is accessible to all, the course materials undergo adaptations such as sign language interpretation, subtitling, and modification of graphic materials. The design of the courses was supported by regional DPOs, for instance, with the Ukrainian Society of the Deaf.

The online courses break geographical barriers, ensuring that they are accessible to participants from both urban and rural areas in the country, and also reaching out to Ukrainian refugees situated across borders. The courses' structure include practical classes, workshops, and feedback sessions.

During two iterations in 2023, more than 130 students actively participated, with up to 100 successfully completing the course.



Career Hub Pro: Freelance offers job training in copywriting, graphic design, and video editing.

By the end of the course, 105 test tasks were accomplished, leading to 38 students receiving 35 offers for further collaboration from partners. Feedback from participants indicates that 67 per cent received remuneration for their work in the two months after completing the course.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The courses are funded by USAID through IREX, an international NGO, as part of the five-year UNITY programme to support Ukrainian youth. The general budget of one course edition for 75 students with disabilities is approximately \$14,000, including trainers and sign language interpreter services.

CSR Ukraine aims to conduct at least two course iterations annually for the next two years.



“The course isn’t only about studying. It’s about opportunities that expand possibilities.”

Andrii Atroshchenko, Head of Career Hub Pro: Freelance, CSR Ukraine



Anastasiia Kovalchuk

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2023

- From February to October 2023 there were 904 course applications.
- Participants are from all 24 Ukrainian regions as well as 10 other countries where Ukrainian refugees currently reside.
- A project of Civil Society.



# Life Stories from around the world



THE STORY OF MEI ISHIKAWA,  
MEMBER OF THE WHITE HANDS CHORUS NIPPON

**“I’m deaf, but I’m not broken. I can sing and dance.”**

*Japan*

My name is Mei Ishikawa. I joined the White Hands Chorus when I was six years old. Until then I didn’t know much about kids with hearing or visual impairments, but I thought it would be awesome to sing in sign language. I was so amazed by the expressions on the faces of the deaf members. Performing with them got me super excited!

In the White Hands Chorus NIPPON we all have roles. Each month we pick a ‘leader’ to guide our rehearsals, and we are there for each other with our eyes, ears, hands, and hearts.

Recently, my friend Misaki taught me that in Japanese Sign Language “people with disabilities” is signed as “broken people.” But she said, “I’m deaf, but I’m not broken. I can sing and dance!” That got us thinking, and we decided to stop using that word. Instead, we agreed to change from “people with disabilities” to “people who are brave and overcome obstacles.” We’re determined to make a change in our society. We will keep singing and taking on all the challenges together because the White Hands Chorus NIPPON is my family.

**i** See also Factsheet on page 53.

THE STORY OF MERT ÖNAL,  
PARTICIPANT IN THE CAMPUS  
OF COLOURS PROGRAMME

**“I connected with experienced business professionals who provided mentorship.”**

*Turkey*

I’m Mert, a 27-year-old visually impaired lawyer. I continued my education as an inclusive student after completing the fifth grade. I graduated from both middle school and high school with honours. I studied law at Istanbul University while simultaneously completing a Bachelor’s degree in sociology through distance education. After graduation I worked for about two years at one of the country’s renowned law firms. Following the required exams, I was appointed as a public attorney for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality.

During my university years I became acquainted with the Campus of Colours programme through Değiştiren Adımlar Derneği (DADER). Here, I had the opportunity to meet peers from different disability groups, learn about major companies, listen to inspirational speakers, and engage in projects for the benefit of an NGO. Thanks to Değiştiren Adımlar Derneği, I connected with experienced business professionals who provided mentorship. I made many close friends through this programme, and I am still volunteering for Değiştiren Adımlar Derneği, where we continue to develop projects aimed at improving our community.”

**i** See also Factsheet on page 81.



## THE STORY OF JHANINA VASQUEZ ALVA, BENEFICIARY OF PAZ Y ESPERANZA'S PERUVIAN SIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMME

**“I would like to be with other deaf people and learn more.”**

*Amazon region, Peru*

My name is Jhanina, I am 27, and I am deaf. During my school years I felt ashamed of being deaf. I couldn't understand what people were saying to me, and when they wrote to me I still couldn't understand because I couldn't read. In my family they spend more time speaking and use sign language very little.

I learned about the sign language programme promoted by the organization Paz y Esperanza when the Municipal Office for the Care of People with Disabilities in Habana sent us an invitation. I went to that meeting with my dad, and there I met other deaf people. At that time they asked me for my name, and I didn't know how to respond. They asked me how old I was, and I managed to understand the question and answer my age, even though I didn't know the sign language numbers. After the meeting my dad encouraged me to learn sign language with the person I met. Little by little I discovered more signs, and I started to enjoy it.

In the future, I would like to learn sign language better, especially for writing. I would like to be with other deaf people and learn more. We hope for a centre just for the deaf, where I can have the opportunity to teach newcomers. I would like to transmit everything I learn in class to other deaf children so when they ask me a question, I will be ready to respond to them in sign language.

**i** See also *Factsheet on page 72.*

## THE STORY OF WAI POO THANT ZIN, BENEFICIARY OF THE LIVING DIGNITY FOR THE BLIND MODEL

**“I am the first visually impaired YouTuber in Myanmar!”**

*Yangon, Myanmar*

My name is Wai Poo Thant Zin and I'm a visually impaired YouTuber. While I was at a school for the blind I developed a deep interest in film and music, so I intended to become a famous singer. However, my album was not a great success. Then I discovered I could find another door to open: a YouTube channel! I took the related trainings even though they were not fully accessible, but I tried to figure them out. Then I received fully accessible training from Living Dignity and was able to design my own YouTube product by myself.

I run the first YouTube channel for the blind in Burma, reading Burmese audio books together with my peer friend. She is near-sighted, but she can read very well. The success of our channel earns enough to cover our living expenses. Then I decided to run another channel to present short dialogues to promote self-advocacy in our community. I collect video clips about the abilities and independent living of different types of disabled persons living in two regions near my native town. I would say that the success of this channel is even greater than the first one because we receive many interesting contacts from community members with disabilities.

**i** See also *Factsheet on page 63.*

## THE STORY OF JOSE PEDRO'S MOTHER, A BENEFICIARY OF THE CENTRO UC SÍNDROME DE DOWN

**“We love going to the centre, we feel at home.”**

*Chile*

I am Natalia, José Pedro's mother, and I would like to tell you a little about our story. At the 26th week of my pregnancy, during a routine ultrasound, the doctor told us that one ventricle of our son's brain was more dilated. That same day an expert saw us and he took a blood sample. After 15 days the doctor called me and told us that the tests had gone bad, because our baby had Down Syndrome. From that moment on I cried every day of the pregnancy, which made me disconnect from my baby.

Due to prenatal diagnosis, I came to the Centro UC Síndrome de Down and it was the best we could do. They calmed us down and told us that “each person and their brain is a world to discover.” And thank God it has been like that.

We started in the programme at 20 days in Jose's life. Currently, my son is developing according to his age and condition. It is the best thing that has happened to us! We love the group modality, the children interact with each other, we learn from the other children and generate bonds and support networks with other families, and the sessions have a wonderful dynamism. In addition, the programme is economically accessible, as we have access to all the therapists in one place at a very low cost. We love going to the centre, we feel at home.

**i** See also *Factsheet on page 36.*

# A government e-system making services to persons with disabilities available by smartphone

## UKRAINE / MINISTRY OF SOCIAL POLICY – UNIFIED INFORMATION SYSTEM

The Unified Information System of the Social Sphere (UISSS) is a project implemented by the Ministry of Social Policy in Ukraine. Its main goal is to simplify access to social support for disadvantaged groups, including people with disabilities. UISSS allows for remote registration and receipt of social services and for using a smartphone to arrange for social services, thus greatly reducing all types of bureaucracy. Persons with disabilities in Ukraine can also be directly supported by international organizations and donors via this system.

### Problem targeted

The provision of efficient support for people with disabilities in Ukraine, a country heavily affected by the war with Russia, is difficult and also often hampered by government bureaucracy.

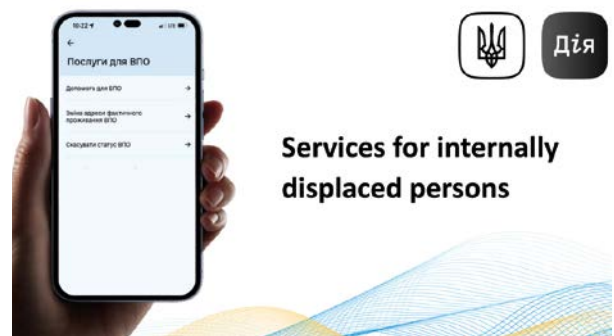
### Solution, innovation, and impact

UISSS creates electronic accounts for recipients of social assistance, accessible through mobile applications, which allows ordering social assistance over the phone.

UISSS plans to access all relevant data from state registers, such as digitalized certificates and data about birth, marriage, birth of children, available property and income, change of address, and death. The new system also reduces the bureaucratic apparatus and administrative costs, minimizes corruption risks, and increases the quality and availability of social support.

The electronic social system is especially supportive for those who are internally displaced or are refugees in other countries, making their access to social security much easier. The war with all its consequences continually increases the number of persons with various disabilities.

In addition, an online platform called eDopomoga is part of the UISSS, which makes it possible for



UISSS provides people with disabilities in Ukraine with remote and easy access to services.

international organizations, donors, and volunteers to reach and support persons with disabilities.

By mid-2023 more than 1.35 million persons with disabilities submitted applications for assistance. In addition, the applications for support of more nearly 439,000 persons with disabilities were transferred to international organizations and donors.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

UISSS has been created and developed with donor funds from international organizations and by the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine.



“Building an effective e-tool for maximum accessibility of social services in wartime is a challenge that you can be proud of.”

Kostyantyn Koshelenko, Deputy Minister of Social Policy for Digital Development, Digital Transformations, and Digitalization



Nataliia Kurash

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2020

- Using the eDopomoga platform, approximately 13 million Ukrainians applied for help.
- By the end of June 2023 some 4.89 million internally displaced persons were registered.
- A project of the Public Sector.

# Vocational training for young people with intellectual disabilities in the Arab region

## UNITED ARAB EMIRATES / SEDRA FOUNDATION – LEARN AND WORK

The SEDRA Foundation, based in the United Arab Emirates, has created the ‘Learn and Work’ programme to help young people with intellectual disabilities across the country transition into the workforce. The programme provides six weeks of hybrid learning to improve digital and communication skills, followed by a three-month paid internship. It concludes with a certificate from the British University in Dubai (BUiD). In 2022 the programme supported 25 young persons with disabilities, with six finding full-time employment.

### Problem targeted

In the United Arab Emirates there is a lack of training opportunities to help young people with intellectual disabilities transition into the workforce.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

In 2021 the SEDRA Foundation in the United Arab Emirates launched the ‘Learn and Work’ programme to help youth with intellectual disabilities enter the workforce. It addresses systemic and individual barriers with targeted training for all involved, including team members and families.

The programme spans five months, starting with a two-week selection and assessment period, followed by a six-week hybrid group learning phase focused on digital and communication skills. The subsequent 12-week, full-time internship is offered in hospitality, culture, tourism, and retail. In a collaborative effort, the intern is matched with an employer. Each week participants work four days and join a weekly SEDRA training day. Typical positions include sales assistants, back-office roles, pastry chefs, waiters, and museum visitor support. SEDRA conducts regular performance reviews and skill development monitoring.

Employers commit to inclusive practice training and receive continuous feedback through online forms, calls, and visits. Participants receive a certificate from the British University in Dubai upon successful completion. In autumn 2023, SEDRA launched



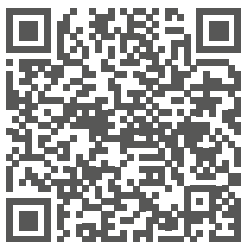
Participants in ‘Learn and Work’ receive a certificate from the British University in Dubai.

its third season with increasing interest from diverse businesses and received public funding support.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The first cycle was fully funded by the SEDRA Foundation, with employers paying remuneration for youth with disabilities during the internship phase. For the second cycle, the project received \$90,000 from the Future Skills programme of HSBC, an international bank, which allowed SEDRA to expand the programme and intensify support. For 2023, SEDRA received public funding to continue the programme.

Ma’an – The Abu Dhabi Authority for Social Contribution has accepted the Learn and Work programme for its funding scheme. Going forward, SEDRA plans to develop sector-specific Learn and Work programmes based on industry needs.



“Inclusive employment works best when we agree to learn together.”

Renate Baur-Richter, Programme Manager, SEDRA Foundation



Renate Baur-Richter

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2021

- For 80 per cent of the employers it was the first long-term inclusive employment programme.
- From 2021 to 2023, 55 programme participants have found jobs.
- *A project of Civil Society.*



# Including regional DPOs in internationally funded development programmes

UNITED KINGDOM / SIGHTSAVERS, IDA – INCLUSIVE FUTURES

Sightsavers, a UK-based international development NGO, together with the International Disability Alliance, led a consortium of 11 organizations to execute Inclusive Futures, an inclusive education initiative operational in Bangladesh, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, and Tanzania. Inclusive Futures integrates children with disabilities aged 4–14 into mainstream schools by putting regional disabled people’s organizations (DPOs) in the middle of operations. Designed to serve as a role model for international development funding, Inclusive Futures enrolled 1,607 children into educational programmes across the five countries in 2021 and 2022.

### Problem targeted

Many international development projects that do not involve local DPOs lead to unsustainable outcomes and a lack of local ownership.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The Inclusive Futures – Disability Inclusive Development Programme works with a consortium of 11 organizations, led by Sightsavers and the International Disability Alliance, with the aim of integrating children with disabilities aged 4–14 into mainstream schools. Children with disabilities, their parents, and especially their representative local DPOs play a central role throughout the entire project cycle, which is implemented in Nigeria (Jema LGA, Kaduna), Kenya (Homa Bay, Kakuma Refugee Camp), Bangladesh (Narsinghdi, Sirajgonj), Nepal (Bharatpur, Kalika), and Tanzania (Mwanza, Shinyanga).

Based on a pilot project in Nigeria (2019–2022), Inclusive Futures works with local DPOs by:

- (1) co-decision-making in prioritizing interventions;
- (2) meaningful representation in project management;
- (3) provision of resources for the DPOs engagement;
- (4) empowering DPOs to lead in advocating with government and other authorities.

As a result, children with disabilities have increased enrolment and retention rates in mainstream schools. Children with severe and complex disabilities who are not in school are provided a pathway to enrol



In 2021 and 2022, Inclusive Futures supported 1,607 children in five countries worldwide.

and study in mainstream schools. Further, teachers are supported to identify children with disabilities and to develop individualized learning plans for them; and schools adapt improved physical accessibility and governance structures to ensure the participation of people with disabilities in decision-making.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The Inclusive Futures programme began in 2018 and has significantly grown, thanks to \$10 million in funding from the UK’s Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office via Sightsavers.

Since Inclusive Futures is designed to change the practices of other development funding agencies and providers, learning resources are broadly shared and available from Sightsavers and the Technical Advisor Group of the IDA.



“Our role as a DPO is to bring about more inclusion and increased participation of persons with disabilities.”

Risikat Toyin Muhammed, Executive Director, Women with Disability Self-Reliance Foundation, Nigeria



Johannes Trimmel

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2018

- In total, the programme will reach about 5,500 children with disabilities (almost equally between girls and boys) between 2018 and 2025.
- A project of Civil Society.

# Cultivating deaf leadership and global advocates from China to the United States

## UNITED STATES / CIDAD – US CHINA DEAF LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

The Center for International Disability Advocacy and Diplomacy (CIDAD) at St. Cloud State University, in the state of Minnesota, initiated a graduate leadership certificate for Chinese citizens who are deaf. The students teach Chinese Sign Language and culture to American deaf students, facilitate a summer camp, and produce advocacy video modules. From its 2016 inception with one student, it plans to involve 30 interns across 15 deaf schools by 2024.

### Problem targeted

In China higher education options beyond art, programming, and dance are limited, restricting the growth of leadership and role models for those who are deaf, at the same time marginalizing the community.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The project is implemented by the Center for International Disability Advocacy and Diplomacy, a hub within the public and Minnesota-based St. Cloud State University (SCSU). It is a one-year formal education project for deaf Chinese students studying in the United States. It concludes with a Graduate Certificate and is intended to increase leadership and advocacy development among deaf Chinese citizens.

Students attend one semester to develop deaf identity, culture, leadership, and advocacy skills. During the second semester they are placed at an American school for the deaf, where they teach Chinese Sign Language and culture to American deaf students. In the third semester the interns lead a summer camp with American deaf students in which they demonstrate mastery of their leadership and advocacy skills.

Students choose a research topic and create a video module on advocacy and fundamental freedoms to bring home and to help build the capacity of knowledge and empowerment among deaf citizens in their own community. At the same time, American

At St. Cloud State University (US), deaf Chinese students can earn a leadership certificate.



deaf students develop global competency skills and second language acquisition through learning about Chinese culture, history, and Chinese Sign Language.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The project was founded with partnerships in China but is expanding and open to deaf students worldwide. Primary funding for the Chinese interns had initially been through the Confucius Institute, which provided travel funds and stipends, while schools for the deaf provided housing and meals. China's Embassy in the US is funding US students to experience a China education abroad. SCSU is also seeking scholarships from the China Scholarship Council for deaf Chinese students to enrol at SCSU.



**“In America the SCSU Deaf Leadership Project is when my true deaf identity was discovered!”**

Jiaxin Mai, Chinese Sign Language teacher, Hainan Association of Sign Language, Hainan, China



Amy Knopf

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2016

- From 2016 to 2023 more than 1,170 US deaf students participated in the teaching and learning of Chinese Sign Language and culture.
- Since 2023, St. Cloud State University offers a Certificate in Deaf Leadership and Advocacy for Deaf.
- A project of Civil Society.

# A professional dance company educating youth about disability inclusion in mainstream schools

## UNITED STATES / INFINITE FLOW DANCE – SCOOPS OF INCLUSION

Infinite Flow is a Los Angeles-based professional dance company and non-profit organization that employs dancers with and without disabilities, working towards a more inclusive world “one dance at a time.” One of its programmes, Elementary School Assemblies, consists of 45-minute interactive presentations that combine dance performance and disability inclusion education. Elementary School Assemblies has reached 25 mainstream schools and some 10,000 youth. During the pandemic a digital film called ‘Scoops of Inclusion’ was established as well.

### Problem targeted

According to the US National Bullying Prevention Center, children with disabilities are two to three times more likely to be bullied than their non-disabled peers. One root cause to these inequities and stigma is the lack of disability awareness and inclusive education.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Infinite Flow is a professional dance company and non-profit organization that employs disabled and nondisabled dancers, with a mission to create a more inclusive world “one dance at a time.” It was founded by Marisa Hamamoto, a stroke survivor, and persons with autism.

Dancers include those with physical disabilities as well as those who are deaf, blind, neurodivergent, or have learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, chronic illnesses, mental illness, etc.

One programme that Infinite Flow has pioneered is its Elementary School Assemblies: 45-minute interactive presentations that combine dance performance and disability inclusion education. By 2023 it had reached 25 mainstream schools and some 10,000 youth.

During the pandemic’s restrictions, Infinite Flow developed ‘Scoops of Inclusion,’ a 47-minute digital film accompanied by a learning platform. This online resource, based on the company’s live performances, is available to a global audience at no cost.



Los Angeles-based dance company Infinite Flow employs disabled and non-disabled dancer.

As of October 2023 there were more than 800 users who had created an online account for Scoops of Inclusion. These users are a mix of individuals, parents, families, teachers, and school administrators. While most are based in the United States, users come from other countries as well.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Infinite Flow’s Elementary School Assemblies programme operates on a hybrid business model. Earned income comes from in-person school assemblies. Partnerships with corporations involving workshops, performances, and content licensing are planned. The virtual format, Scoops of Inclusion, is freely accessible online.

Future plans include expanding the curriculum, establishing partnerships with large television and entertainment companies, and integrating impact measurement tools.



“If children are exposed to disability history, disability awareness, and disability inclusion from a young age, it stays with them their entire life.”

Marisa Hamamoto,  
Founder, Infinite Flow Dance



Marisa Hamamoto

marisa@infiniteflowdance.org – infiniteflowdance.org

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2017

- A survey of 60 students showed 100 per cent agreement that Scoops of Inclusion addresses vital topics.
- A project of the Business Sector.

# An AI-based smartphone app translating conversations into text messages in real time

## UNITED STATES / NAGISH – NAGISH APP

Nagish, a start-up company based in New York, has developed a smartphone app for users who are deaf or hard of hearing. An AI-driven captioning engine converts audio into highly accurate real-time text and vice versa, enabling a seamless conversation between a texting person and a person who is hearing and speaking. Nagish is a free app, financed by corporate partnerships. In 2023 more than 20,000 users communicated via the app in the United States as well as in Canada and Israel. The organization is testing a beta version for companies.

### Problem targeted

Deaf and hard of hearing people very often face communication barriers, especially when trying to make phone calls.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

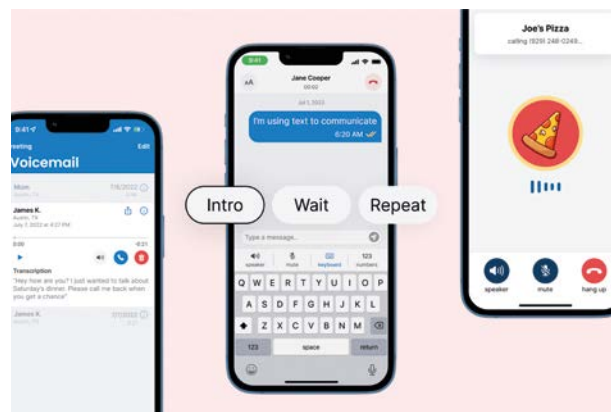
Nagish is a free smartphone app that uses its own AI-driven captioning engine to convert audio into highly accurate real-time text and vice versa in six languages. This allows for use even in noisy environments, and ensures privacy. The app is easy to use and does not require any special training or equipment. Users can simply download the app and start making calls.

The Nagish app is free for all private users, and the company is also in the process of offering an enterprise add-on (in beta testing phase in 2023) that will enable employers to interview and hire deaf and hard-of-hearing persons. The feature can be combined with any video conferencing tools, including Zoom, MS Teams, Google Meet, Cisco WebEx, and more. Comcast, a large US media company, is already using the add-on as part of its beta testing phase.

In 2023, Nagish was available in Canada, Israel, and the United States in English, French, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, and Spanish.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Nagish is funded through venture capital. A



Nagish's free app enables conversation between writing, listening, and speaking people.

certification by the US Federal Communications Commission is pending. Once certified, Nagish will become an official relay provider in the United States and the first US provider to rely solely on AI capabilities.

By the end of 2024, Nagish plans to expand into new markets, offering services in more languages and developing more tools for accessible communication.

Services offered to companies as well as advocacy for governments for subsidizing the private usage will be used to keep the service free for private users in the future.



“Today Nagish is used by thousands of people for anything from ordering pizza to landing a job.”

Tomer Aharoni, CEO and Co-Founder, Nagish

 Mai Tannen  
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FACTS & FIGURES	Start: 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In 2023, Nagish captioned over 500,000 calls.</li><li>• Over 20,000 people use the service in six languages.</li><li>• A project related to ICT.</li></ul>	



# Fast-growing, easy-to-replicate methodology to evaluate and improve inclusion in schools

## UNITED STATES / PERKINS SCHOOL – MODEL PROGRAM APPROACH

Perkins School for the Blind is a large US-based but globally active organization supporting education for children with disabilities. Perkins runs the Model Program Approach to improve inclusive education systematically for children with disabilities in 15 countries across three continents. Using its Perkins Quality Improvement process and methodology, it evaluates existing quality of learning, and then establishes a baseline and goals for improvement together with schools and governments. By the end of June 2023, Perkins had reached over 1 million children through 133 programmes in 15 countries.

### Problem targeted

Most children with disabilities, particularly those living in low- and middle-income countries, lack access to quality inclusive learning.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Perkins School for the Blind, founded in 1829, is the oldest private yet non-profit school for the blind in the United States. For many years it has also been working abroad in middle- and low-income countries. The Model Program Approach is a teachable, replicable method that systematically improves pedagogy for children with disabilities. The approach evolved from Perkins' 200 years of experience teaching children with complex disabilities on its Watertown, Massachusetts campus. Model Programs employ Perkins educational concepts such as child-led learning, choice-making, total communication, and active learning.

The Model Program Approach is practical and hands-on to strengthen the capacity of local leadership and staff to include children with disabilities in learning and community life. For example, teachers and parents across two schools in the Philippines received coaching and mentoring in priority areas identified by the Perkins Quality Improvement process. As a result, children with disabilities in these schools demonstrated improved reading performance and an increase in their literacy assessment scores.



Perkins' Model Program Approach to improve inclusive education is practical and hands-on.

The Perkins Quality Improvement process is used to help design and co-create the training, mentoring, and coaching plan for educators, administrators, parents, caregivers, and community-based practitioners who need specialized skills to help these children learn.


### Outlook, transferability, and funding

The annual budget for the international work is approximately \$4 million. Donors include the UBS Optimus Foundation, Lavelle Fund for the Blind, Bhutan Foundation, and Reinhard Frank Stiftung. The Model Program Approach has already been replicated globally. For example, in Mexico the first model programme was established in the city of Merida in 2019. In 2023 the model has been replicated in 22 schools, reaching 56,000 children.



“Perkins is closing the gap between exclusion and inclusive education because we know that every child can learn.”

Daniela Gissara, Assistant Director, International Partnerships, Perkins School for the Blind

 Daniela Grissara  
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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- The Model Program Approach reached more than 340,000 children with disabilities in 2021 and more than 752,000 in 2022.
- In 2023, some 55,000 teachers, practitioners, and caregivers participated in Perkins Model Program trainings.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# A free open-source tool for increasing cross-disability accessibility of computers

## UNITED STATES / RAISING THE FLOOR – MORPHIC

Raising the Floor, a digital accessibility-focused NGO based in Washington, D.C., initiated Morphic in 2021. Morphic is an open-source programme that provides computer users with easy access to built-in accessibility features and allows them to save preferences and apply them to other computers. This reduces time spent finding accessibility features and eliminates navigating complex interfaces to access them. All versions, personal and enterprise, are free. To date, Morphic has been installed on over 10,000 computers in schools and libraries.

### Problem targeted

Many people, including people with disabilities, older adults, and people with low digital affinity, have difficulty or are unable to use computers without adaptation.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Morphic is designed to support individuals with disabilities who rely on assistive technology for computer access, especially those from under-resourced areas who might not have personal computers and depend on shared ones in schools, libraries, or community centres.

Morphic offers various features that make computers easier to use for those who struggle to use them by making built-in accessibility features readily available with a single click. Morphic offers standard and customizable MorphicBars tailored to individual needs, ensuring ease of use without stigmatizing users with non-visible disabilities. It allows for the creation of a simple interface for those who face difficulty in using computers through the creation of tailor-made MorphicBars that provide simple, always visible, and easy access to just the essential functions these users need.

Morphic works with all software on a computer and makes it easy for organizations, even those with no special resources, to make all their computers more accessible and usable by people who struggle to use them. Morphic is secure, private, open-source, and runs on Windows and Macintosh operating



Morphic provides computer users with easy access to built-in accessibility features.

systems and is free to users and organizations.

As of 2022 it had over a quarter million uses on public-use computers.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Morphic receives grants and gifts to fund its operation, including long-term support through community funding. It is provided at no cost to all individuals and organizations to maximize its deployment and ensure availability to low-resource communities. It is designed so that costs remain almost flat when user numbers grow.

In 2024, Morphic will have a new free feature – AT-on-Demand – enabling users to have their personal assistive technologies show up on any computer they may use at libraries, schools, community centres, job centres, etc. and will then disappear when they are done.



“Morphic provides a wonderful, at-your-fingertips solution; unobtrusive, easy to find, and without stigma.”

Jane Berliss-Vincent,  
Assistive Technology Manager,  
University of Michigan – Ann Arbor

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2021

- In 2022 it was used over 250,000 times on public shared-use computers in schools and libraries.
- A project related to ICT.



Crystal Marte

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# Technology converting complex textbooks into Braille within hours

UNITED STATES / SENSEE

Sensee, a company based in California, has developed an AI-driven technology that converts text into Braille with high accuracy and speed. Sensee makes educational materials accessible for visually impaired individuals, particularly in science and technology subjects. It transcribes math textbooks, including equations and diagrams, within hours. Between 2020 and 2023, Sensee has converted approximately 1.5 million books into Braille, which then can be used by online Braille readers or be printed.

## Problem targeted

Traditional Braille transcription, especially for STEM subjects, is time consuming and costly, leading to accessibility challenges for visually impaired students.

## Solution, innovation, and impact

Sensee's machine learning technology offers a ground-breaking solution for Braille transcription, especially for complicated textbooks that include more than text, such as for science and math. Unlike the traditional manual processes that can take over a year to transcribe a STEM textbook, Sensee's technology can achieve this within hours. Moreover, the company has been able to bring down production cost significantly.

Sensee's algorithm is not limited to just text but extends to complex subjects, including mathematic equations and graphs, thus ensuring visually impaired students receive accurate textbooks promptly. Furthermore, the technology allows for the simultaneous formatting of books to accommodate both print and embossed Braille on the same page. Sensee's publications include such requested materials as Braille books for donations, textbooks and test papers for education, and government newsletter for policy guidance as well as its own original products, which are available in English (50 per cent), Korean (30 per cent), and Spanish (20 per cent). Between



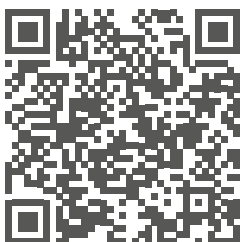
Sensee uses AI to convert educational material into Braille with high accuracy and speed.

2020 and the first half of 2023 the number of pages produced went from 700,000 to 2 million. Sensee has entered collaborations with the Korean Educational Broadcasting System and the El Salvador Government Printing House.

## Outlook, transferability, and funding

As a start-up company, Sensee is based on investments from impact investors and for-profit investors.

The vision of Sensee is a global database platform for people to easily access any document from anywhere in the world. In addition, Sensee is planning to establish automated plants so that the visually impaired, teachers/schools, and governments can purchase its products without being financially burdened.



“Touch the world and see the unseen.”

A visually impaired mother



Hando Kim

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## FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2015

- Sensee estimates that the economic effect of its technology was \$10 million in savings in 2022.
- In the first half of 2023, Sensee produced more than 2 million pages.
- A project related to ICT.

# Fostering inclusive education in Latin America through youth leadership and sports

## UNITED STATES / SPECIAL OLYMPICS LATAM – ESCUELAS UNIFICADAS

Escuelas Unificadas is an inclusive education programme run by Special Olympics Latin America, an INGO based in Panama. The programme promotes an inclusive environment for children and young people with and without intellectual disabilities through joint participation in sports teams and leadership activities inside and outside the classroom. By 2023 the programme has been implemented in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, and Paraguay, reaching over 16,000 young participants.

### Problem targeted

Children and young people with intellectual disabilities often lack opportunities to participate in education and other activities.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

Escuelas Unificadas is a global programme implemented by Special Olympics Latin America (SOLA) in more than 38 countries to foster an inclusive environment for children and youth with and without intellectual disabilities. Starting in 2019, SOLA has been implementing this inclusive educational programme in Brazil, Chile, and Mexico, and by 2023 it expanded to Argentina, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, and Paraguay. Escuelas Unificadas has four primary components:

1. Unified Sport: To bring together young people with intellectual disabilities (Special Olympics athletes) and people without (Unified Partners) to train in sports teams and compete.
2. Young Athletes: To engage children ages 2–7 with and without intellectual disabilities through physical, sensory, cognitive, and social activities.
3. Inclusive Leadership: Both in and out of the classroom, promoting equality and creating an inclusive school environment.
4. Whole School Engagement: Key innovative features are (a) adaptive sports, which promote the participation of people of all abilities, training teachers,



From 2019 to 2023, Escuelas Unificadas reached over 16,000 participants in Latin America.

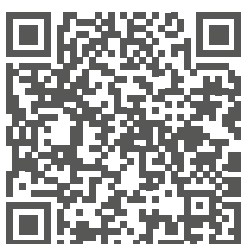
and coaches to create inclusive environments for all students; and (b) unified experiences that promote shared spaces among peers and with people in the community. This involves joint experiences in sports events, community projects, and sport competitions.

In 2023, Escuelas Unificadas had 334 participating schools and 16,748 young people with and without intellectual disabilities involved in seven countries.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Since 2018 the programme has received financial support from the Stavros-Niarchos Foundation and Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates.

SOLA is working with national offices to secure more funding sources and to expand its reach to additional countries in the region in the coming years.



“With the power of youth, the project tackles the bullying and discrimination present in almost all schools.”

Ana Aloe, Director of Innovative Programmes, Special Olympics Argentina



Estefanía Peña Romero

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### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2019

- 89 per cent of those responsible for programme implementation observed an increase in the participation of students with intellectual disabilities in school activities.
- *A project of Civil Society.*



# Using an app, training, and advocacy to fight malnutrition among children with disabilities

## UNITED STATES / SPOON – COUNT ME IN (APP)

SPOON, an international development NGO based in Portland, Oregon, runs a project that combines training with a health app called Count Me In to advocate against malnutrition among children with disabilities. Trained service providers use Count Me In to assess and monitor children's growth, anaemia status, and feeding challenges. In 2022, SPOON trained nearly 600 people in nine countries (primarily in sub-Saharan Africa, but also in Croatia and Viet Nam) who reached over 14,000 children. Count Me In also produces data to advocate for inclusive policies, services, and investments.

### Problem targeted

Children with disabilities experience high rates of malnutrition due to a lack of inclusive nutrition support, and consequently are also more likely to be institutionalized.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

SPOON, an international development NGO based in Portland, Oregon, has embarked on a pioneering project in the fight against child malnutrition, particularly focusing on children with disabilities. This initiative combines training, a digital health app called Count Me In, and advocacy to support children with disabilities.

The project is working in partnership with civil society and governments across diverse settings. The initiative involves training service providers in health, social work, childcare, and early child development through both online and in-person curricula. These trainees gain expertise in nutrition, feeding, disability, and child development. Once trained, service providers use the Count Me In app to assess and monitor children's growth, anaemia status, and feeding challenges over time.

SPOON provides recommendations and care plans, enabling service providers to guide families and caregivers in safe, responsive feeding and nutrition practices. In 2022 alone SPOON trained nearly 600 individuals in nine countries, ultimately reaching over 14,000 children.

SPOON combines training and an app to address malnutrition in children with disabilities.



As of October 2023, some 3,600 children were monitored using the app. Of those who received multiple anaemia assessments, preliminary data show the anaemia rate has declined by 40 per cent, and rates of wasting (weighing too little for one's height) dropped by 23 per cent.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

Implementation of the project in Zambia and Uganda is funded through grants from the the US-based GHR Foundation and by UNICEF in Lesotho. The development of Count Me In was funded by a dedicated fundraising campaign.

SPOON and its partners also work with government entities, including ministries of health and social development, to improve the inclusion of children with disabilities in national efforts to end malnutrition.




“With Count Me In, I can equip caregivers with nutrition knowledge and feeding practices to help children with disabilities grow, learn, and play.”

Lutgard Musiime, Nutrition and Feeding Master Trainer, SPOON

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2016

- From 2016 to 2023, Count Me In has been translated into six languages and used in twelve countries.
- A project of Civil Society.

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# UNICEF's accessible digital textbooks for children with and without disabilities

## UNITED STATES / UNICEF – ACCESSIBLE DIGITAL TEXTBOOKS INITIATIVE

Begun in 2016, UNICEF's Accessible Digital Textbooks (ADT) initiative provides digital textbooks designed for tablets and desktops, which include accessibility features such as audio narration, integrated sign language video, and simple language tools. The initiative was developed with publishers, teachers, disability organizations, technology providers, and ministries of education. By 2023, ADTs have been deployed in nine countries spanning eastern Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, benefiting over 2,500 students globally, with 66 prototypes developed.

### Problem targeted

Access to quality education is a major challenge for children with disabilities, resulting in low enrolment and high drop-out rates.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

ADTs are digitized and adapted versions of curriculum-based textbooks used in classrooms and provide accessible learning for all students, including those with disabilities. They offer customization options such as narration, sign language, interactivity, audio descriptions, and more.

ADTs promote equal educational opportunities and allow students to engage in numeracy and literacy activities in and out of the classroom. They are versatile, customizable, and typically used on electronic devices such as tablets or computers. For remote schools in low-connectivity environments, ADTs can be hosted on content access points and accessed locally. ADTs support multiple formats (EPUB, HTML, and apps.)

ADTs are currently developed and available in nine countries: Colombia, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Kenya, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Rwanda, Uganda, and Uruguay. Globally, 66 ADT prototypes have reached over 2,500 students.

Over 1,600 ministries of education staff, teachers, and stakeholders in six Latin America and Caribbean countries have been trained in ADT production and



UNICEF's ADT initiative provides accessible digital textbooks for tablets and desktops.

use. In Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda, 59 textbooks have been uploaded on national education clouds. Online courses are available in Colombia and Paraguay, and the UNICEF Global Portal on Accessible Digital Textbooks is available to all.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding

ADT usage continues to grow as UNICEF collaborates and partners with governments, foundations, and NGOs. The impact of the initiative has demonstrated its scalability and replicability in other regions where the organization aims to expand its reach by optimizing South-South cooperation.

Moreover, an accessible multi-language online course will be developed for implementers, and hackathons will further leverage new technologies to create accessible content.



“This is my first time reading a book that has sign language. I am happy that I can share this book with my friend and that she is able to hear.”

Ari, a 6-year-old deaf learner in Jamaica



Julie de Barbeyrac

jdebarbeyrac@unicef.org – [accessibletextbooksforall.org](http://accessibletextbooksforall.org)

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2016

- Rwanda made the entire curriculum (55 ADTs) accessible through the education cloud.
- More than 1,600 teachers and stakeholders have been trained on ADTs in nine countries.
- *A project related to ICT.*

# Making mainstream schools more inclusive by using an easy-to-share module to train teachers

## VIET NAM / RCI – LOW-COST TRAINING MODULE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The Research Centre for Inclusion (RCI), a local Vietnamese NGO based in Hanoi, has developed a low-cost training module to increase inclusive education in rural regions. The programme is based on: (1) a hands-on training manual for teachers to be shared easily via flash drives, (2) an assessment tool for development and evaluation, and (3) the setup of a child-friendly support unit within each school. From 2020 to 2023, 120 teachers have been trained, 274 children with disabilities have been taught, and 269 parents and caregivers have been involved.

### Problem targeted

Teachers in Viet Nam are not trained and do not feel confident to teach children with disabilities and provide counselling or advice to parents on how to support their children's studies at home. This is a major factor in the high drop-out rate of children with disabilities from mainstream education.

### Solution, innovation, and impact

The programme 'Ensuring quality and friendly disability education for children with special needs' was established in the districts of Gio Linh and Trieu Phong of Quang Tri province and in Dien Ban district of Quang Nam province.

The aim is to increase access to inclusive education for primary school students with disabilities, including deaf students in the special schools in rural and poor areas. It is based on the training, mentoring, and coaching of mainstream teachers by teachers with disabilities on those skills needed to teach children with disabilities, as well as to involve parents.

The appropriate teaching materials are easily available and shared on flash drives that can be used on any computer or tablet. The manual was tested and improved many times until teachers felt it strongly supports their daily practice.

For sign language teachers, the training is delivered by deaf trainers. In the support/resource units, which are set up in each school, teachers give

From 2020 to 2023, 274 children benefited from a low-cost programme in rural Vietnam.



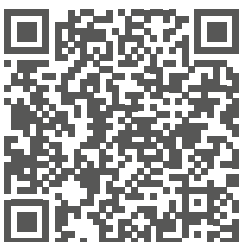
lessons to small groups or individuals with special education needs in a child-friendly environment.

At the national level, the project cooperates with the National Centre for Special Education – a part of the Ministry of Education – to ensure high quality delivery of teacher capacity-building. Similar relationships exist with authorities on the regional level as well.

### Outlook, transferability, and funding


The project was funded with a grant of €176,000 by the Liliane Foundation from the Netherlands. Schools provide rooms, specifically for the resource units.

With the manual available on flash drives, it can be shared widely, and the model can be basically adapted easily by any school in Viet Nam using its library as the resource unit. Going forward, the Liliane Foundations plans to produce an English version of the training materials.



“Even if the project ends, our school will still maintain this unit because children with disabilities enrol every year.”

Ms. Thi Dieu Huong Dang, Vice Principal, Le Hong Phong Primary School, Quang Nam province

 Thanh Thuy Nguyen (Ms.)  
thuy.nguyen@nlrmekong.org – rci-nlr.org

### FACTS & FIGURES

Start: 2020

- In addition, more than 500 children with disabilities participated in outdoor and skills training.
- *A project of Civil Society.*

# Peer Reviewers 2023–2024

The Zero Project is grateful to all these experts with and without disabilities, who joined into this year's selection process, listed by country A–Z.

Country	First Name	Last Name	Organization
Argentina	Silvana	VEINBERG	Fundación Canales
Armenia	Hripsime	NAZARETYAN	Bridge of Hope
Australia	Eileen	HOPKINS	Access Innovation Media
Australia	Corene	STRAUSS	Australian Disability Network
Austria	David	CURTIS	Light for the World Austria
Austria	Nicole	CVILAK	AfB social & green IT
Austria	Dudu	GENCEL	Vienna Business Agency
Austria	Sylvia	GÖTTINGER	Vienna Business Agency
Austria	Alexandra	HILGERS	Takeda
Austria	Klaus	HOECKNER	Hilfsgemeinschaft – Access Austria
Austria	David	HOFER	LIFEtool
Austria	Wolfgang	KOWATSCH	myAbility Social Enterprise GmbH
Austria	Sabine	LOBNIG	Mobile & Wireless Forum
Austria	Susanne	MAURER-ALDRIAN	Lebenshilfen Soziale Dienste GmbH
Austria	Paul Anton	MAYER	atempo GmbH
Austria	Klaus	MIESENBERGER	Johannes Kepler University Linz
Austria	Martin	MORANDELL	Smart In Life
Austria	Gerhard	NUSSBAUM	KI-i – Competence Network
Austria	Werner	ROSENBERGER	Hilfsgemeinschaft – Access Austria
Austria	Germain	WEBER	University of Vienna, Department of Psychology
Austria	Franz	WOLFMAYR	ZFSW – Zentrum für Sozialwirtschaft
Austria	Emauela	ZAIMI	DSA – Down Syndrome Albania Foundation & Achievement and Development Center
Bangladesh	Vashkar	BHATTACHARJEE	YPSA – Young Power in Social Action

Country	First Name	Last Name	Organization
Bangladesh	Murteza R.	KHAN	BBDN – Bangladesh Business & Disability Network
Bangladesh	Paul	SOUROV KUMER	DRRA – Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association
Bangladesh	Farida	YESMIN	DRRA – Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association
Belgium	Koen	DEWEER	Konekt vzw
Belgium	Kamil	GOUNGOR	ENIL – European Network on Independent Living
Belgium	Christo	VELKOV	Special Olympics Belgium
Belgium	Luk	ZELDERLOO	Consultant
Brazil	Adriana	GOMES ALVES	Univali – University of Itajai Valley
Cameroon	Blandine	ANGELE MESSA	EduClick
Canada	Monica	ACKERMANN	Scotiabank
Canada	Orly	FRUCHTER	Azrieli Foundation
Canada	Linda	PERRY	Vela Microboard Association
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Chile	Rene	ESPINOZA	Lazarillo Tec SpA
Chile	Verónica	MELERO	Fundación Reinaldo Solari
Chile	Javier	PIÑEIRO	Olimpiadas Especiales (OOEE)
Chile	Francisca	REUTTER	Fundacion Ilumina
Chile	Carola	RUBIA DURÁN	Fundación Descúbreme
Chile	Jerónima	SANDINO	UNESCO
Chile	Andrea	VILELA	Fundación Descúbreme
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## Network of Peer Review and Factchecking 2023–2024 (continued)

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Egypt	Ramez	MAHER	Helm
Finland	Kirsi	KONOLA	KVPS
Finland	Petra	RANTAMAEKI	KVPS
Germany	Stephan	DERTNIG	Consultant
Germany	Oliver	NEUS-CHAEFER	CBM – Christoffel Blind Mission Germany
Germany	Helen	RADEMAKERS	PIKSL – Living in the community gGmbH
Germany	Bernd	SCHRAMM	GIZ – German Corporation for International Cooperation
Germany	Thomas	TRUEMPER	GIZ – German Corporation for International Cooperation
Germany	Jan	WIEDEMANN	Drachensee Foundation
Germany	Nils	WOEBKE	capito Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
Greece	Dimitris	NIKOLSKY	Foundation The children's home
India	Alina	ALAM	Mitti Cafe
India	Rajesh	KHANNA	Youth4Jobs Foundation
India	Apoorv	KULKARNI	OLA Mobility Institute
India	Rochana	MITRA	Youth4Jobs Foundation
India	Sayomdeb	MUKHERJEE	Enable India
India	Pooja	MUKUL	Jaipur Foot Organization (BMVSS)
India	Jacob	POULOSE	Social Alpha
India	Sameer	RAWAL	Tata Consultancy Services
India	Meera	SHENOY	Youth4Jobs
India	Sankara Raman	SRINIVASAN	Amar Seva Sangam
India	Dipesh	SUTARYA	Enable India
India	Julian	TARBOX	Enable India
Israel	Or	COHEN	Global Ramp
Israel	Tammy	MARGALIT	ASAT – As Simple As That
Italy	Fabrizio	SERRA	Fondazione Paideia
Italy	Alice	ZULLO	Fondazione Paideia
Jordan	Samir	ESAID	Arab Episcopal School Irbid
Jordan	Rana	MATAR	King's Academy
Kenya	Faith	MASENGO	EnableMe – Kenya
Kenya	Irene	MBARI-KIRIKA	inABLE
Moldova	Silvia	APOSTOL	Swedish Development Partner, Regional Office Moldova
Moldova	Ludmila	MALCOCI	Keystone Human Services International – Moldova Association
Namibia	Regina	HAUSIKU	Namibian Ministry of Arts, Education and Culture
Nepal	Birendra Raj	SHARMA POKHAREL	Action on Disability Rights And Development-Nepal
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Netherlands	Matthijs	NEDERVEEN	Enable Me
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Norway	Christian	HELLEVANG	Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities
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Qatar	Ramy	SOLIMAN ABDULZAHER	Bonocle Inc.
Romania	Tudor	SCRIPOR	Scripor Alphabet Association
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Saudi Arabia	Wajdi	WAZZAN	King Abdulaziz University
Serbia	Ksenija	LALOVIC	University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture
Serbia	Zarko	SEBIC	Boarding School Milan Petrovic, Novi Sad
Singapore	Prema	GOVINDAN	SG Enable
Singapore	Yogeswari	KUNUSEGARAN	DPA – Disabled People's Association Singapore
Singapore	Marissa	LEE MEDJERAL-MILLS	DPA – Disabled People's Association Singapore
Singapore	Alvin	TAN	SG Enable
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South Africa	Nick	DE LA HUNT	Wigital
South Africa	Amanda	GIBBERD	South African Department of Transport
South Africa	Lana	ROY	Afrika Tikun (Lubner Foundation)

Country	First Name	Last Name	Organization
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Spain	Daniela	BAS	DB SustainABILITY Advisory Boutique International
Spain	Ferrán	BLANCO ROS	Support Girona
Spain	Carlo	CASTELLANO	AsoPMR – Association of People with Reduced Mobility
Spain	Gerardo	ECHEITA	Universidad Autónoma Madrid
Spain	Óscar	GARCÍA MUNOZ	Plena Inclusion Madrid
Spain	Eduardo	JAUREGUI	Irisbond
Spain	Federico	MARITIRE	Independent consultant (disability expert)
Spain	Antonio-Luis	MARTINEZ-PUJALTE L.	University Miguel Hernández de Elche
Spain	Estefanía	MIRPURI	ONCE
Spain	Ana	MOHEDANO	Organización Iberoamericana de Seguridad Social (OISS)
Spain	Mónica	OTAOLA	Universidad de Salamanca (INICO)
Sweden	Kjell	STJERNHOLM	Stjernholm Ord AB
Switzerland	Michael	LORZ	Enable Me
Turkey	Mehmet	KIZILTAS	Engelsizkariyer
Turkey	Ozen	PULAT	Sabancı Vakfi Foundation
United Arab Emirates	Fatma	AL JASSIM	Disability inclusion and Accessibility Consultant
United Arab Emirates	Renate	BAUR RICHTER	SEDRA Foundation for Inclusion of P. w. Disabilities
United Arab Emirates	Esha	KHURSHID	Key2enable Assistive Technology MENA Ltd
United Kingdom	David	BANES	David Banes Access and Inclusion Service
United Kingdom	Ethan	BROOKS	Waymap
United Kingdom	Bernard	CHIIRA	Global Disability Innovation Hub
United Kingdom	Jonathan	HASSELL	Hassell Inclusion Ltd.
United Kingdom	Christine	HEMPHILL	Open Inclusion
United Kingdom	Neil	MILLIKEN	ATOS
United Kingdom	Christopher	PATNOE	Google Inc.

Country	First Name	Last Name	Organization
United Kingdom	Katherine	PAYNE	Royal Society for Blind Children
United Kingdom	Nathan	ROWE	Down Syndrome International
United Kingdom	Artemi	SAKELLARIADIS	Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education
United States	Sara	BASSON	Google Inc.
United States	Bryan	DAGUE	University of Vermont, Center on Disability and Community Inclusion
United States	Alex	DUNN	Enabled Play
United States	Mary	FERNANDEZ	Cisco Systems
United States	Genevieve	FITZGIBBON	Keystone Human Services International
United States	Daniela	GISSARA	Perkins School for the Blind
United States	Brian	HART	LADD Inc.
United States	Amy	HEBERT KNOPF	St. Cloud State University
United States	Katherine	HOLLAND	Perkins School for the Blind
United States	Amy	HURST	NYU – New York University
United States	Elaine	KATZ	Kessler Foundation
United States	Christopher M.	LEE	G3ICT
United States	Lauren	LINDSTROM	UC Davis
United States	Charlotte	MCCLAIN-NHLAPO	World Bank Group
United States	Theophilus	ODAUDU	Disability Rights Fund
United States	Rylin	RODGERS	Microsoft Corporation
United States	Debra	RUH	Ruh Global IMPACT
United States	Mark	TRIEGLAFF	ACT Services Inc.
United States	Connie	VANDARAKIS	DanceAbility
United States	Breandan	WARD	NYU – New York University
United States	Edward	WINTER	World Vision United States
United States	Amy Xiaorong	ZHOU	Confucius Institute, St. Cloud State University
Yemen	Manal Ali Saleh	AL-ASHWAL	Al Saeeda Society for the Care and Rehabilitation of Deaf Girls in Yemen
Zambia	Bright M	BWALYA	Seizure Assistant

# The Zero Project – explained in Easy Language

## What is the Zero Project?

In 2008, the Essl Foundation began the Zero Project.

This project aims for a world where people with disabilities face no barriers.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) is the foundation of this goal.

The UN CRPD is a big promise by countries to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Almost every country has agreed to follow this promise.

Sadly, people with disabilities often do not get fair treatment or the same opportunities because of their disabilities.

But there are innovative and helpful ways to ensure everyone gets equal chances.

The Zero Project is all about finding and sharing these ways to support people.

Its mission is to create a world where no one is left behind just because they have a disability.

## How does the Zero Project work?

Every year the Zero Project searches for, selects, and shares good solutions on one of four specific themes.

The themes rotate every year. These themes are:

- Education: It was the theme in 2020 and is now in 2024.
- Employment: It was the theme in 2021 and will be again in 2025.
- Accessibility: It was the theme in 2022 and will be again in 2026.
- Independent Living & Political Participation: It was the theme in 2023 and will be again in 2027.
- Every year the Zero Project also looks for solutions in technology, often called ICT (which stands for Information, Communication, and Technology).

Solutions in the arts are also greatly encouraged, so people with disabilities can enjoy museums, films, music, etc.

Each year, the Zero Project shares these good solutions:

- in a report, called the Zero Project Report,
- at a conference, called the Zero Project Conference
- and online on our website, which is [www.zeroproject.org](http://www.zeroproject.org).

## **Theme 2024: Education**

Disability-inclusive education means making sure everyone can learn together, no matter if they have a disability or not.

It's about giving all students, including those with disabilities, the same chances to learn, participate, and enjoy school.

In practice, this could mean:

- Schools have ramps and elevators, so students who use wheelchairs or have trouble walking can move around easily.
- For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, a sign language interpreter might be present in the classroom to translate what the teacher is saying.
- Teachers use different ways to explain things so that all students can understand. For example using pictures, physical objects, or acting things out instead of just talking.
- Very often also technology is used, like apps on tablets or laptops.

## **Zero Project Awardees**

This year, the Zero Project received 523 nominations from 97 countries.

These nominations included different ways to help people with disabilities.

Some were about helping young children with disabilities get ready for school.

Others were about training programmes that help students with disabilities find jobs.

There were also nominations for technologies like smartphone apps designed to assist people with disabilities.

Many groups of experts then reviewed all the nominations and selected those that they found best.

A selected solution must have the following:

- It must be new.
- It must work and do something better.
- It should also work in another area or place.

Each of the selected solutions gets a prize.

The prize is called the Zero Project Award.



These selected solutions are called: Zero Project Awardees.

In 2024, 77 solutions from 43 countries won the Zero Project Award.

Every year the Zero Project features the Zero Project Awardees in a report.

This report is called the Zero Project Report.

## **The Zero Project Conference**

The Zero Project organizes a big conference every year.

It is called the Zero Project Conference.

Professionals with and without disabilities

from all over the world attend the conference.

They talk about good solutions for a barrier-free world and they exchange their experiences.

The conference takes place at the offices of the United Nations in Vienna.

Since 2021 everyone can also join the conference on the Internet.

## **Zero Project Database**

The Zero Project places all solutions into a database that looks like Google.

The solution database is called: the Zero Project Database.

In this database you can find all the Zero Project Awardees and their solutions since the very first Awardees in 2013.

All information is free and for everyone to use.

You can easily search the solutions using keywords, at: [www.zeroproject.org](http://www.zeroproject.org)

## **Zero Project in Austria**

In Austria, the Zero Project focuses on the employment of persons with disabilities.

Companies should experience and understand that there are many advantages to employing persons with disabilities.

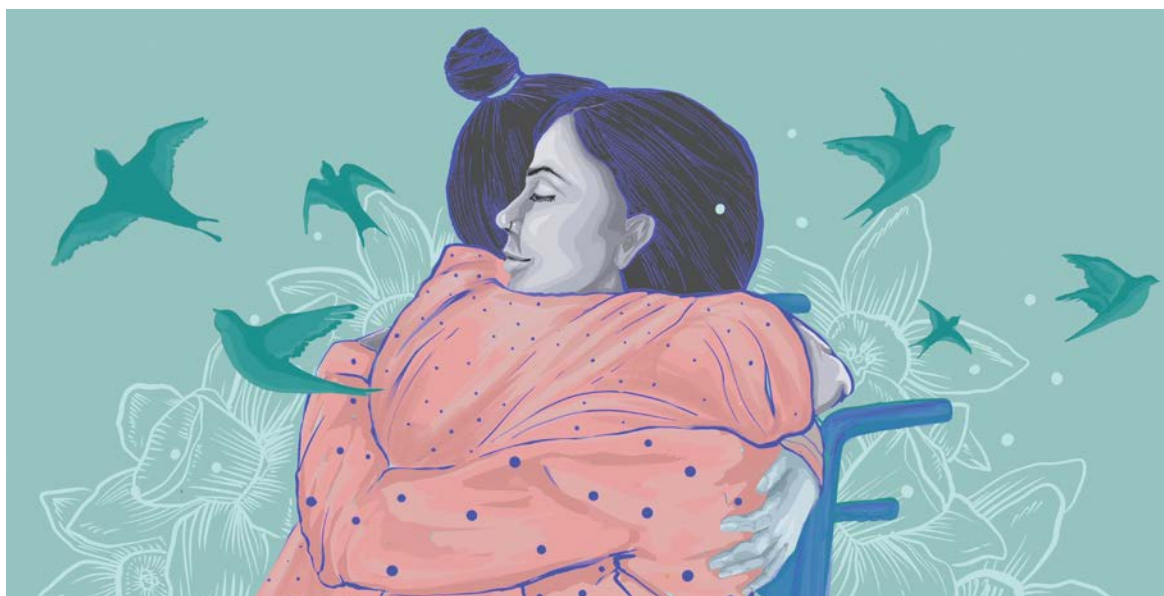
For this reason, the Zero Project in Austria:

- offers information and examples to companies and organizations;
- produces a magazine with employment suggestions every year in the Austrian daily newspaper *Die Presse*;
- gives awards to companies that employ persons with disabilities.

# List of Acronyms

	Contact	IOS	Operating System of Apple smartphones
\$	Refers to the US-Dollar, unless noted differently	IS	International Sign (Language)
€	Euro	ISO	International Organization for Standardization
ADHD	Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder	IT	Information & Technology (see ICT)
AI	Artificial Intelligence	ITU	International Telecommunication Union
Android	Operation system of smartphones	LLC	Limited Liability Company
App	Software installed on a smartphone, tablet or laptop	Ltd	Limited (registered company)
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder	MEP	Member of the European Parliament
ASL	American Sign Language	MP	Member of Parliament
AT	Assistive Technology	NEET	(Young people) Not in Education, Employment or Training
B2B	Business-to-Business relation (not to the end-user)	NGO	Non-governmental organization
BSL	British Sign Language	OAS	Organization of American States
CBM	Christoffel Blind Mission	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CBR	Community-based rehabilitation	OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
CBS	Community-based services	ONLUS	Organizzazione Non Lucrativa Di Utilità Sociale (Non-Profit Organization, Italy)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	OPD	Disabled people's organization
CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	QR Code	Barcode for Scanning (Quick Response Code)
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility	SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
CV	Curriculum Vitae (resumé)	STEM	Science, Technology, Electronics and Mathematics
DAISY	Digital Accessible Information System	TVET	see VET
DPO	Disabled people's organization	UAE	United Arab Emirates
DRC	DR Congo, Democratic Republic of Kongo	UD	Universal Design
e.V.	eingetragener Verein (registered Association, Germany and Austria)	UK	United Kingdom
EAA	European Accessibility Act	UN	United Nations
EASPD	European Association of Service Providers	UN CRPD	see CRPD
ECI	Early childhood intervention	UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
EDF	European Disability Forum	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
EEA	European Economic Area (most EU-countries and Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein)	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
ENIL	European Network for Independent Living	UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
Erasmus+	EU grant-funding programme	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
ESF	European Social Fund	UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
EU	European Union	US	United States of America
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit	USAID	United States Agency for International Development
GPS	Global Positioning System	VAT	Value Added Tax
Horizon2020	EU grant-funding programme	VET	Vocational and educational training
HR	Human Resources	W3C	World Wide Web Consortium
HTML	Hypertext Marker Language (Computer language used for websites)	WBU	World Blind Union
ICT	Information and communication technologies	WCAG	Accessibility Standard for Web applications
IDA	International Disability Alliance	WHO	World Health Organization
IL	Independent Living	WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization		
Inc.	Incorporated (for-profit organization in US, UK and other countries)		
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies		

# Zero Project Inclusive Arts



**INCLUSION** was created during the Zero Project Conference in February 2023 by the Serbian artist Jana Danilović. The artwork speaks to the universal truth that tactile touch and love breaks down all barriers and remains a source of strength for all.



**Monument of Hope**  
An accessible Monument of Hope, commissioned in gratitude for the safety of the participants of the Zero Project Conference 2020, has found a permanent home at the entrance of Austria's largest university hospital in 2023. The memorial stands as a symbol of collective resilience during challenging times.



**Inclusive Museums Guide**  
The Inclusive Museums Guide offers a nationwide overview of accessibility and inclusion in local museums. This guide highlights a range of features, from entrances to workshops, aiming to make art and culture accessible for all. Created in collaboration with ICOM Austria and the Essl Foundation.



Learn more about  
Zero Project Inclusive Arts

## The next research themes of the Zero Project are Employment and ICT.



**Join the Zero Project Network!** Scan the QR code in order to provide us with your contact details, ensuring that you will receive our official Call for Nominations email. Nomination start in May 2024.

**Facebook**  
[/zeroproject.org](https://www.facebook.com/zeroproject.org)

**LinkedIn**  
[/zeroproject](https://www.linkedin.com/company/zeroproject)

**X**  
[/zeroprojectorg](https://twitter.com/zeroprojectorg)

**YouTube**  
[/zeroprojectorg](https://www.youtube.com/zeroprojectorg)

**Instagram**  
[/zeroprojectorg](https://www.instagram.com/zeroprojectorg)