Invitation From Susan Sygall
Mobility International USA
CEO and Co-Founder

Everywhere I travel I am in awe of the youth leaders with disabilities I meet who are changing the world. At Mobility International USA (MIUSA), we are working towards a world where all people with disabilities achieve their full human rights through international exchange and development. We believe that the path to a more inclusive world lies in people with disabilities connecting with their peers and allies across the world and working together. In this issue of the A World Awaits You (AWAY), we focus on the next generation of world travelers – youth with disabilities – who are transforming ideas of disability rights like we have never seen before.

Diversity is increasingly important; Americans with disabilities are attending schools with the full force of laws like the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and more and more students with disabilities around the world are receiving protections under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). Social media technologies like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube are making the world more accessible by connecting people, building ideas, planning activities and advancing domestic and international social movements.

Estimates suggest there are between 180 and 220 million youth with disabilities worldwide, nearly 80 percent of whom live in developing countries, according to the fact sheet on youth with disabilities produced by the United Nations for the International Year of Youth. With half the world's population below the age of 15, the number of youth with disabilities can be expected to rise markedly over the coming decades.

That's where you come in! We ask you, influencers of the next generation of travelers and leaders, to think about your own cultural perceptions and preconceived notions of what is possible, look at the systems and networks you work within, and become an ally in our efforts to change the face of international exchange through the full inclusion of people with all types of disabilities. It's our time and responsibility to ensure youth with disabilities are fully represented and have equal access to the life-changing experience of international exchange. This AWAY issue introduces you to the stories of youth with disabilities who have participated in international exchange, shares tips for addressing the unique challenges they may face and offers perspectives from the professionals and families that support them.

Join us. We are here to support you on your journey!