CELEBRATING MIUSA’S STORY

MOBILITY INTERNATIONAL USA

ADVANCING DISABILITY RIGHTS
AND LEADERSHIP GLOBALLY®
CELEBRATING MIUSA'S STORY
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MISSION
To empower people with disabilities to achieve their human rights through international exchange and international development.

VISION
To ensure a just, accessible and inclusive community in which the human rights, citizenship, contribution and potential of people with disabilities are respected and celebrated.

VALUES
• continue to be an innovator in the international development, international exchange and leadership fields to change policies and empower individuals and organizations
• define issues in the context of human rights
• focus on outcomes
• focus on grassroots work that supports new leaders in the global disability community
• collaborate with global partners who share similar goals to bridge communities
• effect inclusive practices based on the rights of people with disabilities
• support gender-focused programming
• serve a cross-disability audience which includes people with cognitive, hearing, learning, mental health, physical, systemic, vision and other disabilities
If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost. They are where they should be. Now put foundations under them.

– Henry David Thoreau

By celebrating the past, we begin to embrace the future and all the possibilities that it holds. This book is a testimony of Mobility International USA’s amazing accomplishments since 1981, made possible by our wonderful staff, donors, partners, host families and alumni around the world.

The future offers endless possibilities in the fields of international development, international exchange and leadership training. By implementing innovative programs, we are building bridges to create a new era where people with disabilities will take their rightful place in the world community.

We are part of a great family of people with disabilities and allies, working together to share our experiences and strategies so that those who follow may have a wider and easier path to achieving their human rights.

We are only limited by our ability to dream of what is possible. At Mobility International USA, there is no shortage of dreams.
Many years ago Mobility International USA arose as a dream in the hearts and minds of two dear friends who could hardly talk of anything else; we were planning around the dinner table, brainstorming, and painting our vision. Truly that time was one of the highlights of my life. It is with humility and gratitude that I congratulate all of the leaders and participants from all over the world for achieving many years of cross-cultural collaboration, and becoming a model non-profit, non-governmental organization whose impact has changed the world. You are a dream come true.

Barbara Williams-Sheng, Co-Founder, Mobility International USA

What an honor it has been to work with so many people around the world, both personally and professionally. The relationships we have made have enriched all of our lives. What a privilege to be part of this global community and to work with such excellent staff.

Cindy Lewis, Director of Programs, Mobility International USA

As an original member of MIUSA’s board of directors, I can look back now to see that we paved the way for people with disabilities to move forward with options. MIUSA encouraged people from so many countries to take risks, challenge themselves and become leaders.

Linda Phelps, Board President, Mobility International USA
All over the world, thousands of people with disabilities are making changes because of Mobility International USA’s programs. They have taken the skills they have learned in MIUSA’s leadership programs and turned them into action for the rights of people with disabilities in the international development field.

We are proud to have Oregon as MIUSA’s home.

*U.S. Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR)*

MIUSA’s leadership programs have enabled thousands of people around the world to experience the opportunities shared by Oregonians with disabilities. Working together, MIUSA has enabled a global disability community to share strategies to work toward a more equitable world.

*U.S. Representative Peter DeFazio (D-OR)*

Today, MIUSA celebrates many years of accomplishments that have built international bridges among people with and without disabilities. My hope is that MIUSA will be equally successful in the years to come in building upon a vision of inclusion, empowerment and independence.

*U.S. Senator Ron Wyden (D-OR)*
CELEBRATING MIUSA'S HISTORY

The Early Years
Moving Forward
Expanding Our Horizons
The Early Years

1981
• MIUSA established

1982
• Published A Guide to International Educational Exchange and Community Service for People with Disabilities
• Published Low Cost Travel for Persons Using Wheelchairs
• Published A Guide to International Workcamps for People with Disabilities

1983
• International Community Service – Inbound
• German Professional Exchange – Inbound
• Published A World of Options – 1st Edition
• Challenge Yourself and Change the World® (Slideshow)

1984
• International Community Service Program – Inbound
• US/Germany Professional Exchange – Outbound

1985
• England Youth Exchange – Inbound
• Published A World of Options – 2nd Edition

1986
• US/England Youth, Art and Culture Exchange – Outbound
• US/Costa Rica Young Disability Professional Exchange – Inbound
• US/Costa Rica Young Disability Professional Exchange – Outbound

1987
• United Kingdom – Costa Rica Delegate Reunion – Inbound
• US/Italy Youth Exchange – Inbound
• Mi Casa Es Su Casa (Video)

1988
• Germany Youth Exchange – Outbound
• China Young Professionals Disability Exchange – Outbound
• Germany Youth Exchange – Inbound
• Home is in the Heart (Video)

1989
• International Young Professional Leadership and Disability Training Exchange – Inbound

1990
• USSR Youth and Environmental Exchange – Inbound

1991
• Mexico Leadership and Disability Exchange – Inbound
• Russia Leadership and Disability Exchange – Inbound
• USSR Environmental and Youth Exchange – Outbound

1992
• Bulgaria Disabled Youth Exchange – Inbound
• Former Soviet Union Employment & Education Exchange – Inbound
• Former Soviet Union Environment & Youth Disability Exchange – Inbound
• International Christian Youth Exchange Community Service Exchange – Inbound
• Mexico Leadership and Disability Exchange – Outbound
• US/Japan Focus on Deaf Issues Exchange – Outbound

1993
• Bulgaria Youth and Disability Exchange – Outbound
• Young Professionals East Asia Employment & Education Exchange – Inbound
• El Salvador Disabled Veterans Exchange – Inbound

1994
• Former Soviet Union Young Professionals Employment & Education Exchange – Outbound
• Japan Young Professional Disability Exchange – Inbound
• Mexico Leadership and Disability Exchange – Inbound
• Russian Environmental Youth and Disability Exchange – Outbound
• Published A New Manual for Integrating People with Disabilities into International Educational Exchange Programs

1995
• Azerbaijan Youth Exchange – Inbound
• Japan/YMCA Youth Exchange – Inbound
• Mexico Leadership and Disability Exchange – Outbound
• Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan Youth Exchange – Inbound
• International Young Adult Leadership Exchange – Inbound
• International Youth Leadership Exchange – Inbound
• Philippines Young Professional Disability Exchange – Outbound

1996
• Mongolian Disability Technology Exchange – Outbound
• New Zealand and Australia Professional Disability Rights Exchange – Outbound
• Mongolia Disability Appropriate Technology Exchange – Outbound
Moving Forward

1995
- National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange established
- Azerbaijan Youth Exchange – Inbound
- Azerbaijan Youth Exchange – Outbound
- Mexico Young Leadership and Disability Exchange – Outbound
- Morelia Enrichment Exchange – Outbound
- Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan Youth and Disability Exchange – Outbound
- International Youth Leadership Exchange – Inbound
- International Young Adult Leadership Exchange – Inbound
- Young International Adult Leadership Exchange – Inbound
- Youth Leadership Exchange – Inbound
- Japan YMCA Exchange – Inbound
- Japan Disability Rights Exchange – Inbound
- Japan Consulting on Disability Issues Exchange – Outbound
- Newly Independent States (NIS) Consulting Disability Issues Exchange – Outbound
- Looking Back, Looking Forward (Video)
- Published Building Bridges: A Guide to Including People with Disabilities in International Exchange Programs – 1st Edition
- Published Loud, Proud, and Passionate® – 1st Edition
- Published A World of Options – 3rd Edition
- Published A World Awaits You journal – Volume 1
- Published A World Awaits You journal – Volume 2
- Published A Manual for Including Young People with Disabilities into US/NIS Exchange – 1st Edition
- First Campus Collaboration Campaign launched
- First online survey of college students with disabilities participation in education abroad
- Published A Manual for Including People with Disabilities into US/NIS Exchange – 2nd Edition
- Published A World Awaits You journal – Volume 3
- Published A Resource Guide for Students with Disabilities
- Loud, Proud, and Passionate® (Video)

1997
- Germany Professional Disability Exchange – Inbound
- International Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD) – Inbound
- Mexico Youth Leadership and Disability Exchange – Inbound
- Young Adult Leadership Exchange – Inbound
- Japan Disability Rights Exchange – Inbound
- Germany Disability Professional Exchange – Inbound
- Bosnia Disability Rights Consulting Exchange – Outbound
- Disability Rights Consulting to Vietnam and Micronesia Exchange – Outbound

1998
- International Symposium on Women with Disabilities and Microcredit – Inbound
- Japan Professional Exchange – Inbound
- Oaxaca Mexico Professional Exchange – Outbound
- Mexico Disability Youth Leadership Exchange – Outbound
- International Teen/Parent Leadership Exchange – Inbound
- Japan YMCA Youth and Disability Exchange – Inbound
- Japan Professional Exchange – Outbound
- Joining Hands Conference brings together key exchange and disability leaders

1999
- Future Leaders Exchange Evaluation Workshop (FLEX)
- Youth Leadership, Diversity Rights Exchange Costa Rica – Outbound
- Japan/US Exchange: Cross Cultural Perspectives on Leadership and Disability Rights – Inbound
- Japan/US Exchange: Cross Cultural Perspectives on Leadership and Disability Rights – Outbound
- NCDE conducts survey of frontline responses to including people with disabilities
- Published Campus Collaboration Campaign booklet
Expanding Our Horizons

2000
- Future Leaders Exchange Evaluation Workshop (FLEX)
- Costa Rica Youth Leadership and Disability Exchange – Outbound
- Global Options for Women with Disabilities Exchange – Inbound
- US/Vietnam Disability Professionals Exchange – Inbound
- NCDE conducts two World of Options conferences and expos
- Social Security Administration Initiative
- Published A World Awaits You journal – Volume 4
- Published A Guide to Including People with Disabilities in International Exchange Programs – 2nd Edition
- Building Bridges Training Video

2001
- 20th Anniversary Reunion
- Leadership Exchange for

2002
- MIUSA receives a three-year USAID project to include people with disabilities in international development programs
- Zambia and Zimbabwe: Microcredit project with women with disabilities
- US/England: Cross Cultural Perspectives on Disability Exchange – Outbound
- Intensive Leadership Training and Follow-on Exchange Program for Women with Disabilities from Uzbekistan – Inbound
- Published A World Awaits You journal – Volume 5
- Published A Guide to Including People with Disabilities in International Exchange Programs – 2nd Edition

2003
- US/England Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Disability and Performing Arts Exchange – Outbound
- Future Leaders Exchange Evaluation Re-entry Workshop (FLEX)
- Published A World Awaits You journal – Volume 6
- Published A World Awaits You (U.S. Teen Edition) online journal
- Published A World Awaits You (International Youth Edition) online journal

2004
- Timbuktu, Mali: Training with international development and disability organizations
- US/Japan: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Disability Leadership and Volunteerism Exchange – Outbound
- Future Leaders Exchange Evaluation Re-entry Workshop (FLEX)

2005
- NCDE launches Muslim World Initiative
- Jordan: Training with international development and disability organizations
- US / Japan: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Disability and Volunteerism Exchange – Outbound
- Future Leaders Exchange Preparatory Workshop (FLEX)
- Published A World Awaits You (U.S. Teen Edition) online journal
- Published A World Awaits You (International Youth Edition) online journal

2006
- NCDE launched second Campus Collaboration Campaign
Expanding Our Horizons

2007

- Published A World Awaits You (Muslim World Edition) online journal
- Published A World Awaits You (Non-Apparent Disabilities Edition) online journal
- Published A World Awaits You (Youth Influencers Edition) online journal
- US/Japan: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Disability and Volunteerism Exchange – Outbound
- 3rd International Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)
- 3rd Gender, Disability and Development Institute (GDDI)
- 25th Anniversary Advanced International Leadership and Disability Reunion Institute
- FLEX Preparatory Workshop for 2006
- 25th Anniversary Celebration
- Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Preparatory Workshop/Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Leadership and Reentry Workshop
- Provided field-based technical assistance for the Building an Inclusive Development Community project in Ecuador, Guatemala and Albania
- Published “Moving towards Inclusion: Stories of People with Disabilities in International Development

2008

- US/Bahrain: Youth Citizenship for Disability Inclusion Program - Outbound
- Latin America International Leadership, Employment and Disability (I-LEAD) Exchange Program - Inbound
- NCDE Foreign Language and Disability Tele-Training Conference
- Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Preparatory Workshop

2009

- US/Bahrain Professional Exchange Program - Outbound
- International Leadership, Employment and Disability (I-LEAD) Professional Exchange Program - Inbound
- US/Costa Rica: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Disability Rights Leadership Exchange Program - Inbound
- Provided field-based technical assistance on inclusion of children with disabilities in Zambia and Uganda
- Provided field-based technical assistance for the Building an Inclusive Development Community project in Colombia, Ethiopia, Jordan and Mali
Expanding Our Horizons

• **Global Perspectives on Disability-** University of Oregon Graduate/Undergraduate Course
• Presented the 1st Disability Inclusion Award at the annual InterAction Forum
• Published A World Awaits You (ECA Special Edition on U.S. Department of State Exchange Programs)

2010

• Awarded small grants to disability-led organizations in Colombia, Ethiopia, Jordan and Mali
• Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Preparatory Workshop
• Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Preparatory Workshop
• Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX)/Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Leadership and Reentry Workshop
• International Leadership, Employment and Disability (I-LEAD) Advanced Exchange Program – Inbound
• US/Costa Rica: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Disability Rights Leadership Exchange Program – Outbound
• 5th International Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)
• Advanced Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)
• 5th Gender, Disability and Development Institute (GDDI)
• Bahrain Professional Sports Exchange Program – Outbound

2011

• 30th MIUSA Anniversary Celebration
• Published two AWAY Topics
• Global Perspectives on Disability- University of Oregon Graduate/Undergraduate Course
• Provided intensive trainings for USAID and Disabled People’s organizations in Colombia, Ethiopia and Jordan
• Provided youth inclusion and parent advocacy trainings in Uganda and Zambia
• Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX)/Youth Exchange and Study (YES)/American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange (A-SMYLE) Preparatory Workshop
• Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX)/Youth Exchange and Study (YES)/American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange (A-SMYLE) Leadership and Reentry Workshop
• Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Preparatory Workshop
• China Inclusive Sports for Youth with Disabilities Exchange Program – Inbound
• Jordan Young Women with Disabilities Exchange Program – Inbound
• Spain Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Disability Rights Exchange Program – Outbound
• 6th International Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)
• 6th Gender, Disability and Development Institute (GDDI)
• Global Perspectives on Disability- University of Oregon Graduate/Undergraduate Course
• Bahrain Professional Sports Exchange Program – Outbound
• China Inclusive Sports for Youth with Disabilities Exchange Program – Outbound
• Jordan Young Women with Disabilities Exchange Program – Outbound

2012

• Convened “Think Tank” advisory meeting for
• Spain Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Disability Rights Exchange Program – Outbound
• 6th International Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)
• 6th Gender, Disability and Development Institute (GDDI)

2013
• Published AWAY journal magazine and AWAY Topics booklets
• Global Perspectives on Disability-University of Oregon Graduate/Undergraduate Course
• Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX)/Youth Exchange and Study (YES)/American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange (A-SMYLE) Preparatory Workshop
• Pakistan Professional Disability Leadership Exchange Program – Inbound
• Empower Partnerships for Inclusive Communities in 19 countries professional exchange program in 19 countries – Inbound and Outbound
• 7th International Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)
• 7th Gender, Disability and Development Institute (GDDI)
• Kenya and Tanzania Disability Rights Project with Handicap International

2014
• Published two AWAY journal magazines
• Global Perspectives on Disability-University of Oregon Graduate/Undergraduate Course
• Convened national Roundtable Consortium Member advisory meeting
• Conducted Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State training
• Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX)/Youth Exchange and Study (YES)/American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange (A-SMYLE) Preparatory Workshop
• Armenia Sports for Success Professional Exchange Program – Inbound and Outbound
• Pakistan Women with Disabilities Exchange Program – Outbound
• U.K. Youth with Disabilities Leadership and Empowerment Exchange Program – Inbound
• Empower Partnerships for Inclusive Communities in 20 countries professional exchange program in 20 countries – Inbound and Outbound
• RightsNow! Strong Communities Through Enforcing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Project launched in Kenya, Mexico and Vietnam
• Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD) Training Manual developed
• Kenya and Tanzania Disability Rights Project with Handicap International

2015
• Published Passport to Possibilities video series
• Conducted U.S. Department of State’s Fulbright Foreign Student enrichment seminar U.S. Disability Rights: 25 Years of the ADA and Beyond
• Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability Training-of-Trainers Program
• Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability – El Salvador Program
• Produced The Power of WILD video
• Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX)/Youth Exchange and Study (YES)/American Serbia and Montenegro Youth Leadership Exchange (A-SMYLE) Preparatory Workshop
• RightsNow! Strong Communities Through Enforcing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Project trainings conducted in Armenia, Guatemala, Kenya, Mexico, Peru and Vietnam
• Brilliant and Resilient Photo Exhibit featured at InterAction conference
• 8th International Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)
• 8th Gender, Disability and Development Institute (GDDI)
• Year of Exchange in America for Russians (YEAR) Program
• 35th MIUSA Anniversary Celebration

2016
• Convened national NCDE Roundtable Consortium Member advisory meeting
• Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX)/Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Preparatory Workshop (A-SMYLE) Preparatory Workshop
• RightsNow! Strong Communities Through Enforcing the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Project trainings conducted in Armenia, Guatemala, Kenya, Mexico, Peru and Vietnam
• Brilliant and Resilient Photo Exhibit displayed in cities in the eastern United States, El Salvador, Mexico and Indonesia
• Celebration of the 25th anniversary of the ADA in partnership with the University of Oregon

Published Brilliant & Resilient: Celebrating the Power of Disabled Women Activists book

Launched Global Disability RightsNow! Resource Center Web site

Kenya and Tanzania Disability Rights Project with Handicap International
CREATING A WORLD AS IT SHOULD BE

International Exchange Programs
National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange
International Development and Disability
Women with Disabilities and Leadership
INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS
Challenge Yourself and Change the World®

Emerging Leaders
Cross-Cultural Opportunities
Disability Rights
Life Changing Experiences
MIUSA pioneered inclusive short-term international exchange programs in the United States and abroad beginning in 1981, and has worked with over 2,300 alumni with and without disabilities from over 135 countries. These alumni leaders are part of a global MIUSA family. As ‘change agents,’ alumni stay connected to MIUSA through international reunions and alumni activities, and MIUSA continues to utilize their leadership skills as consultants and trainers throughout the world. Our unique programs focus on youth, young adults, parents, professionals and women in a world where people with disabilities commonly face discrimination, barriers and isolation, especially as they become leaders. During our intensive programs, delegates from all over the world come together to share information, stories and strategies to find innovative ways to make changes in their communities. We live by the motto: Challenge Yourself and Change the World®.

From living with homestay families to participating in community service projects; from climbing ropes high in the treetops to rafting down rapids; from interactive workshops on parenting to seminars on political processes; from utilizing the media for creating positive images of our aspirations to forming action plans to revolutionize what is possible for people with disabilities: this is what MIUSA exchange programs are all about. The MIUSA exchange experience changes each of us: on a personal level by developing self confidence, on a political level by developing a rights-based philosophy and on a global level by networking with disability groups around the world. We are: Loud, Proud, and Passionate®!
When MIUSA brings young leaders to the US, they have the opportunity during their stays to experience the achievements of the US disability rights movement such as accessible streets, shops and public transportation. They also observe the full inclusion of children with disabilities in regular education classes, and adults living independently and working in the community, which is a departure from their experiences in their home countries. These experiences help visitors envision what is possible, and what they can strive for when they return home.

Mary Lou Breslin, Senior Policy Advisor
Disability Rights Education Defense Fund

Over the years, the Kellogg Foundation has supported Mobility International USA to create life-changing opportunities. By bringing together people with disabilities from all corners of the world, MIUSA has developed a new cadre of leaders, ready to train others in their communities. MIUSA alumni are active and vital in making necessary changes to transform their societies so that disabled people can enjoy the same opportunities as their non-disabled peers.

Frank Taylor, former Program Director, Kellogg Foundation
Exchanges for Youth and Young Adults

Growing up with a disability is not always easy. But imagine being in an environment for the first time where being disabled is cool. Imagine where suddenly you’re never left out of an activity such as riding an accessible public bus, camping or river rafting, but instead are encouraged to engage in the full range of international educational and career opportunities. You are in an environment where you learn how to assert your rights as a young person with a disability and to confidently pursue your professional dream, no matter what others have told you. Returning to your home countries, you broaden your horizons and find a renewed confidence to increase your leadership skills and to serve as mentors and recruiters so that others with disabilities can have these life-changing opportunities. MIUSA’s inbound leadership programs bring young people from throughout the world to celebrate their disabilities, build alliances and establish friendships that last beyond the exchange.

MIUSA’s outbound youth exchange programs enable young people with disabilities from the United States, including many from minority backgrounds, to experience just this. We explore other cultures to gain confidence and develop a sense of what it means to be part of a global family.
I have a disability and I am proud of it. As a young Bahraini woman of short stature, I have often felt that there has been little opportunity for people like me to make a difference in the world. From my international exchange experience in the United States, I have become a more confident person. I had the opportunity to show the world what I have to offer and to discover new things about myself that I can use to make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities in Bahrain.

Zainab Buhamood, 2007 U.S./Bahrain Youth Citizenship for Disability Inclusion Exchange Program, Person of short stature from Bahrain

I have certainly changed in the United States. My exchange year had a huge impact on me. This includes changing my dreams, changing my perspective on people with disabilities. Also seeing how the rights for people with disabilities are making the U.S. more accessible gave me some ideas and goals to apply in my home country.

Batuhan Demir, 2014-15 Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) Program, Student who is blind from Turkey

As an ambitious and driven person, I will put everything I learned in the program to use. My future lies in the field of civil rights law, which makes the international exchange program to Costa Rica fully relevant to my education.

Haben Girma, 2009 DeWitt Program, Person who is Deafblind from USA
Homestay Family Experiences

By opening up their hearts and homes, families from Oregon and around the world have welcomed people with a variety of disabilities. Host families are the heart and soul of the MIUSA cross-cultural experience. Together we share meals, explore cultural traditions and learn to navigate new cities. MIUSA delegates become an integral part of a family whose friendship continues years after the program has ended.

We travel vicariously through our experience as MIUSA homestays, meeting some of the most amazing people over the years. We have hosted teens and disability leaders from Australia, Kosovo, Malawi, Pakistan, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Every delegate has enriched our lives. We have learned about new parts of the world and have had our faith reinforced that things will change if enough of us work together to make it happen.

Evelyn Anderton, MIUSA Homestay Host in Eugene, Oregon

Living with my host family has surprised me a lot; learning that there are people who are so kind was exemplary to me. Someday I would like to have the opportunity to be a host family for someone from another country.

Maria Eugenia Ochoa Guerrero (Ecuador), 2013 Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)
Professional Exchanges

Community leaders may not be able to imagine what they have never experienced. What if you’ve been taught that all children with disabilities should be in segregated schools until one day while in Eugene, Oregon, you see children who are Deaf, blind or have cerebral palsy successfully included in a regular classroom? What if you have never experienced a public bus system that is 100% accessible? Sharing information and strategies with a group from many countries creates a cross-cultural environment where new ideas flourish. Professional exchanges allow individuals with experience in fields such as education, health, independent living, legislation and transportation, to gain new perspectives about what is possible. In many countries, parents have been the icebreakers to ensure that their children have the same rights as non-disabled young people; MIUSA brings parents of youth with disabilities together, to learn and gain strength from sharing experiences, returning home prepared to create new opportunities.
Taiwan
Tajikistan
Tanzania
Thailand
Trinidad
Turkey
Turkmenistan
Uganda
Ukraine
United Arab Emirates
United Kingdom
United States of America
Uruguay
Uzbekistan
Vanuatu
Vietnam
Yemen
Zambia
Zimbabwe
I was fortunate to be part of the team of smart, committed professionals from the U.S. The Bahraini disability advocates, professionals, parents, government officials and educators were incredibly motivated to move their country forward. I came home from Bahrain with a bond that I will feel forever.

Susan Henderson, Executive Director of the Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF), Person with a physical disability from USA

Participating in meaningful international exchanges through MIUSA and other programs truly gave me the confidence, independence and practical skills to become a successful leader. ‘Challenge yourself and change the world®’ is not just a mere idiom, it has become a personal philosophy that guides my actions and empowers me to strive even higher.

Angela Winfield, 2002 U.S./England exchange program, Person who is blind from USA
Bridging People, Programs and Places
Providing Practical Information and Creative Ideas
Promoting Life-Enhancing Exchanges
NATIONAL CLEARINGHOUSE ON DISABILITY AND EXCHANGE

Dreams become reality: a young woman using a wheelchair will spend a high school year in England; a college graduate who is blind will teach English in Costa Rica; a person with a learning disability will volunteer at a school in the Philippines; a professional who is Deaf from Kenya will come to the United States to be a Fulbright scholar.

By building bridges between the international exchange and disability communities, MIUSA has enabled thousands of people with disabilities, from young high school students to mid-career professionals, to broaden their horizons by volunteering, researching, studying and teaching abroad. These international experiences are becoming more inclusive and accessible as a result of publications, trainings and referrals provided by the National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange (NCDE). Since 1995, the United States Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs has sponsored MIUSA to administer the NCDE, a comprehensive resource for information and technical assistance to people with disabilities and to exchange and disability organizations.
Virtually since its inception, Mobility International USA has been an invaluable partner to the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the U.S. Department of State in striving to include people with disabilities in international exchange programming. Since 1995, with the launching of the ECA-sponsored National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange, MIUSA has been sending the necessary message about the importance and relevance of including people with disabilities in international exchange and how to accomplish that in the United States and around the world. We greatly appreciate and value our relationship with MIUSA and are very proud of the results of that relationship.

David Levin, Senior Program Manager and Diversity Coordinator, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, U.S. Department of State
Bridging People, Programs and Places

When MIUSA conducted our first U.S. national survey in 1981, we found that less than one percent of exchange programs reported that people with disabilities had participated. We are proud to say that number is changing each year as more and more people with disabilities go abroad with support from the NCDE!

Today, our National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange serves a worldwide audience to empower people with disabilities to take advantage of the same international exchange opportunities as everyone else, navigating any access barriers along the way. Our extensive web site, information and referral services, publications, videos and initiatives have provided people with a world of options. NCDE also collaborates with disability-related organizations and international exchange organizations to ensure that people with disabilities are actively recruited and involved in the wide range of international exchange programs. From publishing information on the legal rights and responsibilities related to exchange programs to sharing advice and connecting people to resources, we ensure that we all have the opportunity to enhance our lives with an international and a disability perspective.

MIUSA provides people with disabilities with the resources they need to access international exchange opportunities from path-breaking adventures where no disabled person has gone before to well-worn programs so familiar they seem like family; opening up a world in which possibility is limitless and every person is welcome.

John Hockenberry, award-winning journalist
Providing Practical Information and Creative Ideas

From China to Morocco, Mexico to South Africa and the United States, our initiatives focus on cutting-edge priorities to increase the participation of people with disabilities in international exchange. We outreach to communities all over the world including higher education, youth, parents, special educators, individuals from diverse backgrounds and international organizations. Their experiences and tips are included in our publications encouraging people with disabilities to participate in the same life-enhancing programs as their peers. We recognize the need to keep information flowing to these underrepresented communities, and to find the answers they need to navigate barriers in new cultures and environments abroad. From presenting at major conferences to providing free online tools, referrals and publications, we show how it can be done.

The dedication to excellence fostered by MIUSA in the many and varied projects it has pursued serves as a shining example.

Mark O. Hatfield, former U.S. Senator (R-OR)
Roundtable Consortium

The NCDE is a collaborative effort between MIUSA, the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) of the United States Department of State and major international exchange and disability organizations. Together this advisory team, the Roundtable Consortium, is responsible for developing and carrying out strategies to accomplish the NCDE’s goals.

Access Living
AFS-USA, Inc.
Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange
American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)
American Councils for International Education (ACIE)
Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD)
Association on Higher Education And Disability (AHEAD)
Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)
Council on Standards for International Educational Travel (CSIET)
Cross-Cultural Solutions
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Diversity Abroad
Global Ties U.S.
Institute of International Education (IIE)
IREX
Mobility International USA (MIUSA)
NAFSA -- Association of International Educators
PACER Center
Perkins
World Learning
University of California, Education Abroad Program
United States Department of State / Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA)
University of Minnesota, Access Abroad
United States International Council on Disabilities (USICD)

Together, we can build a world of international exchange that is accessible to all.

Peggy Blumenthal, Senior Counselor to the President, Institute of International Education

The Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) is committed to increasing access for students with disabilities on all our programs. We believe that all students should have the opportunity to have international educational experience — to learn and develop skills abroad that they simply cannot do at home. CIEE and MIUSA have been partners for more than 20 years in increasing the number of students with disabilities through trainings, scholarships and inculcating a philosophy of inclusion throughout the study abroad community. We are honored to celebrate this partnership!

Maritheresa Frain
CIEE, Executive Vice President Study Abroad
International Development and Disability Program

Human Rights
Inclusive Development
Technical Assistance and Training
Disability and Development Partnerships

Photo courtesy of Barbara Williams-Sheng
The inclusion of people with disabilities is an issue that crosscuts international development and projects that aim to eradicate poverty. People with disabilities, particularly women and girls with disabilities, consistently rank among the poorest of the poor, yet continue to be overlooked.

From Timbuktu, Mali to Lima, Peru, through the islands of Palau to Amman, Jordan and Hanoi, Vietnam, MIUSA’s trainings have changed the paradigm of international development by framing the inclusion of people with disabilities as a human rights issue. Our extensive international network of grassroots disability-led partner organizations provides a vast resource for non-governmental organization (NGO) consultation, capacity building and partnerships for our colleagues working in international development. MIUSA’s technical assistance ensures that people with disabilities participate fully and equally at all levels of the development process, as volunteers, trainers, field staff, policy makers, community members and administrators.
Partnerships for Change

MIUSA is widely recognized as a leader of change, and our partnerships are a key reason why we are succeeding at our goal of advancing disability rights globally. MIUSA is an active member of InterAction, a coalition of U.S.-based international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) focused on the world’s poor and most vulnerable people.

Through our Special Consultative Status to the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and role as co-chair of UNICEF’s Task Force on Leadership & Mentoring for Children and Young Women with disabilities we are making positive changes for people with disabilities at a global level.

We ensure that inclusion of people with disabilities is on the international development agenda.

Over the years, MIUSA’s active leadership has brought many contributions to InterAction’s coalition of over 180 U.S. based international NGOs that focus on the world’s poor and most vulnerable people. MIUSA’s work transcends national boundaries, bridging the disability and development communities. MIUSA established the first Disability Inclusion Award, convened the InterAction Disability Affinity Group, and served as the catalyst for developing InterAction’s Private Voluntary Organization Standards on Disability. Their tireless advocacy to ensure the inclusion of people with disabilities unequivocally supports all of our efforts to alleviate the world’s development challenges.

Sam Worthington, CEO of InterAction
We appreciate and highly value our special partnership with MIUSA. MIUSA’s support to Mercy Corps headquarters and field operations in terms of providing resources (lectures, workshops, trainings, information, and guidance) has widened our conceptual understanding of the principle of participation, and enabled field offices to make real progress in the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of our programming.

Neal Keny-Guyer, CEO, Mercy Corps

The experience and expertise of MIUSA and its U.S.-based consortium partner organizations are an excellent match for us. We are eager to exchange strategies and learn from our colleagues in the U.S. and other countries involved in this project.

Nguyen Thi Lan Anh
Director, Action to the Community Development Center (ACDC), Vietnam
Advancing Rights of Persons with Disabilities Internationally

Globally, people with disabilities have a critical role to play in the growth and development of strong communities. However, individuals with disabilities are too often excluded from contributing to their communities and experiencing their human rights. Discrimination and inaccessibility persist, in spite of laws and policies that should protect the civil rights of people with disabilities due to lack of effective implementation, monitoring and enforcement.

The RightsNow! Project, administered by MIUSA and sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Rights and Labor, is led by a U.S. Consortium and provides technical assistance to civil society and governments by sharing the U.S. experience on development, implementation and enforcement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other relevant legislation. This important project develops trainings, tools, an online resource center, and builds networks of disability leaders in project countries to advance the rights of people with disabilities through effective implementation and enforcement of legislation.

The RightsNow! U.S. Consortium works in partnership with local disabled people’s organizations to implement national and local laws and policies. The project engages all segments of societies to promote equal access to education, employment, information technology, gender-based violence prevention resources, and community-based alternatives to institutionalization.
WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES AND LEADERSHIP
LOUD, PROUD AND PASSIONATE®

Women’s Empowerment
Gender, Disability and Development
The Power of WILD
Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)

There are few experiences in life as incredible as being surrounded by disabled women from all over the world who share a passion for life and pride in being a woman with a disability. In a world in which women with disabilities are not perceived as leaders, it is critical for us to work together and support each other. Through a series of intensive workshops, women who give life to ideas for social change move forward in their personal and professional roles as disabled world leaders. Workshops focus on using the media, implementing policy and legislation, networking with international allies, improving employment and educational opportunities and advocating for accessible health care. Disabled women flourish in MIUSA’s women’s leadership programs, from sharing intimate stories of our childhood, to celebrating with drums and songs from around the world. We know that the love and support we feel in this space will continue, and that we will continue to feel Loud, Proud and Passionate® long after we board our separate planes and return to our distant homes.

One of MIUSA’s unique attributes is that we naturally work with a gender lens. Empowerment of women is integral to who we are and what we do. Our Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD) programs bring together new and emerging grassroots women leaders with disabilities from around the world to build skills, exchange experiences and strategies, create new visions and strengthen international networks of support to improve the lives of women and girls with disabilities. These “WILD Women” truly are changing the world as they return to their countries with new tools and a commitment to address issues of critical importance to women and girls with disabilities.
When the Beijing UN Women’s Conference ignited the international disabled women’s movement in 1995, MIUSA committed to uniting women with disabilities from around the world. Today, the international WILD program provides an invaluable forum for women with disabilities to share their experiences and strategies, build skills, and strengthen their networks of support.

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, U.S. Department of State

MIUSA’s celebrated Brilliant & Resilient book and photo exhibit shares the stories of WILD disabled women activists who are articulating their needs, issues and achievements to the world and infiltrating broader human rights and gender equality movements. All proceeds support future WILD programs.
I returned to Peru with a new energy – an energy that I received from MIUSA. I was offered the position of the Chief of the Special Education Unit of the Ministry of Education in my country of Peru.

Madezha Cepeda, 2003 Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD), Person who is blind from Peru

My experience at the 3rd International Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability has enabled me to feel more confident about myself and my capabilities. I learned about grant writing and inclusive education and now I have more resources to support my work.

Lee Chin, 2006 Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD), Person with a physical disability from Malaysia

I’ve changed a lot from this experience. I see things differently now, and this experience has helped me in a positive way. I’m amazed by myself!

Jenny Chinchilla, 2015 WILD Training-of-Trainers Program, Person with a physical disability from El Salvador

Sharing my experiences with other women with various disabilities from across the world, rafting down the McKenzie River, doing the challenge course, staying with a host family and enjoying disability friendly Eugene were some of my best experiences.

Josephine Kalunda, 2008 Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD) Program, Person who is deaf from Kenya
Gender, Disability and Development Institute

Linking women with disabilities directly to development agencies

The Gender, Disability and Development Institute (GDDI), an innovative retreat offered during the Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability program, brings together development decision-makers and disabled women leaders from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Eurasia, Latin America and the Middle East. The Institute goes beyond rhetoric and workshops to engage individuals in direct dialogue about strategies for including women with disabilities in development projects throughout the world.
The Power of WILD

The idea for WILD grew out of the U.N. NGO Forum for Women in Beijing in 1995, where disabled women from around the world gathered at a MIUSA symposium.

Now, we are expanding the reach of this program by preparing alumni to replicate the unique WILD model in their own countries through WILD Training-of-Trainers programs using MIUSA’s experience-based curriculum.

These disabled women activists, representing diverse disabilities, are change agents in their communities. They are addressing issues such as civil and human rights advocacy, reproductive health, education, literacy, economic empowerment, HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence.

I will transfer the knowledge and skills that I gained from the WILD Training-of-Trainers to build the capacity of other women with disabilities in my country. Over the years, the multiplier effect of my participation will empower millions of disabled women in Africa and beyond to position themselves as great leaders working to improve the lives of disabled and nondisabled women alike.

Ekaete Umoh,
Person with a physical disability from Nigeria
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Join our powerful network, make a donation and become part of the change!

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132 E. Broadway, Suite 343 Eugene, OR 97401 USA
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• Walmart Foundation
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MIUSA STAFF

MIUSA is an ever-evolving team of amazing people who are passionate about disability rights and international issues. Our dedicated staff continues to bring a combined wealth of knowledge, experiences and insights that span the world. Our language skills range from American Sign Language, Arabic, French, and Greek, to Hebrew, Russian, Serbian, Spanish and Thai. We have acquired our international experiences by living in places such as Australia, Honduras, Hungary, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, New Zealand, Serbia, Thailand, Turkey, Yemen and Zambia. We are Peace Corps and AmeriCorps volunteers, international exchange participants, disability rights activists and women’s rights activists.

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ADVANCING DISABILITY RIGHTS
AND LEADERSHIP GLOBALLY®
Mobility International USA
132 E. Broadway, Suite 343
Eugene, OR 97401 USA
Tel: (541) 343-1284
Fax: (541) 343-6812