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Introduction

Youth with disabilities have the potential to be leaders and citizen diplomats throughout the world, and many have already become leaders in their communities and countries. Yet youth with disabilities are still among the most marginalized and poorest of all the world’s youth. They commonly face more discrimination and severe social, economic, and civic disparities as compared with those without disabilities, especially in developing countries. This is increasingly true for girls and young women with disabilities, who often have even less access to opportunities as their male counterparts.1

Too often, youth with disabilities do not reach their full potential because of the historical exclusion and discrimination they face. Often, they lack role models who look like them and may have accepted preconceived notions that limit their potential. Unfortunately, youth with disabilities who might have been interested in working for change often miss out on life-changing opportunities to be leaders.

The Leadership and Mentoring Task Force for the Global Partnership for Youth with Disabilities is committed to improving access to mentoring and leadership opportunities for youth and young adults with disabilities. The catalyst for this survey came from the pressing need to understand how youth with disabilities can access better knowledge, tools and skills to become leaders.²

Asking youth directly about their experiences with their own leadership development was key to the survey design. Since youth leaders with disabilities are experts on their own issues, the strategy for change must be informed, guided and led by youth with disabilities themselves.

It was also important to understand the landscape of existing youth leadership programs, to identify what challenges organizations face in serving and including youth with disabilities in their programs and what additional opportunities and programs should be implemented.

By understanding this landscape, we can begin to make the changes needed to ensure youth with disabilities have access to the same leadership and mentoring opportunities alongside their non-disabled peers. Focusing on developing strong young leaders with disabilities who are empowered and prepared to advocate for themselves and lead change, rather than focusing solely on trying to change societal attitudes, will ultimately break down barriers of exclusion and remove stigma.

We invite you to join in this global effort to prioritize and invest in the potential and power of youth with disabilities to become active, engaged citizens and leaders. Empowerment of youth with disabilities is vital to building sustainable and successful disability rights movements and an inclusive, vibrant civil society.

**Purpose of the Survey**

The Global Partnership for Children with Disabilities (GPCwd) Leadership and Mentoring Task Force was tasked with executing a mapping exercise to better understand 1) what leadership and mentoring opportunities are available for youth and young adults with disabilities and 2) what opportunities youth and young adults with disabilities are currently accessing and what they need to develop leadership skills. Ultimately it is hoped that the findings can be used to strengthen training, leadership and mentoring opportunities for young people with disabilities.

**Methodology**

To accomplish the goal, the Task Force determined that two surveys should be developed to gather information from two distinct cohorts – organizations that provide training/mentoring and young people with disabilities themselves. To develop the surveys, the Task Force contracted two young adult leaders with disabilities to craft an organizational survey and a young adult survey. They received guidance and feedback on each survey from Task Force members. These same young adult leaders also led the process of survey distribution.

The methodology of the mapping exercise had some limitations, including the following factors:

1. The survey was only available online, meaning that those without internet access may not have been able to access the surveys.
2. The surveys were only available in English, meaning that those who did not speak English and had no translation services available would not be able to participate.
3. The respondents were self-selected, and thus motivated to participate.
4. The surveys were distributed within the Task Force networks, and thus the respondents may already have a strong understanding of disability inclusion.
5. The surveys were text-based, and thus only those with the ability to comprehend written text were able to participate. This may have unintentionally excluded those without literacy skills.

Findings have to be interpreted with caution because respondents are not a representative sample of the population, but a small, self-selected group of organizations and individuals. As they were recruited

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through the GPcwd network it could be assumed that they have better access to networks, opportunities, communication, and technology. While there is much to learn from the data collected, we believe that there are demographics that are not represented in the findings.

**Organizational Survey**
The organizational survey included 22 questions, both multiple choice and open-ended. The Leadership and Mentoring Task Force of the GPcwd explored the practices of organizations that promote leadership opportunities for young people with disabilities around the world. The survey was structured to identify these organizations, determine the age groups they work with, whether they include youth with disabilities, and the challenges they face regarding disability inclusion.

**Youth Survey**
The youth survey included 24 questions, both multiple choice and open-ended. The questions were focused on the personal experiences of the respondents. The survey assessed the factors that prevent youth with disabilities from becoming leaders and identified measures that could remove these barriers.

**Distribution**
Both surveys were offered in English via Survey Monkey. An accessible text only version was also available. Both surveys were distributed across the Task Force’s networks and were disseminated electronically. The Task Force also collaborated with the Youth Council of the GPcwd on distribution efforts.

**Overview of Responses**
Fifty organizations from across 26 countries responded to the organizational survey. Fourteen (14) percent were based in low income countries, 25% in lower middle income countries, 16% in upper middle income countries, and 41% in high income countries (4% have no data for this question). All organizations were nonprofit organizations and 76% were NGOs, and of those, 32% were Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs). Governmental bodies (2%), schools (8%) and colleges (2%) represented the smallest number of participating organizations. There were no responses from for-profit organizations. Organizations were spread between national (38%), local (30%), and international (32%) in scope. It is important to note that 89% of responding organizations have people with disabilities on staff.

Seventy-three young people from 26 countries responded to the survey on individual experiences in leadership opportunities. Seven (7) percent of respondents were from low income countries, 30%
from lower middle income countries, 21% from upper middle income countries, and 38% from high income countries (the remaining 4% have no data for this question). More than half were female. Sixty-eight respondents (93%) self-identified as having a disability; almost half reported a physical disability. Respondents with intellectual disabilities accounted for only 1% of participants. A further breakdown is available in Chart 1.

Chart 1: Types of Disabilities of Young People Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Visual Impairment (including blindness)</th>
<th>Learning disabilities</th>
<th>Deaf/hard of hearing</th>
<th>Deaf/hard of hearing</th>
<th>Physical disabilities</th>
<th>Intellectual disabilities</th>
<th>Developmental disabilities</th>
<th>Psychosocial disabilities</th>
<th>Other (please specify)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Further Breakdown of Respondents Based on Region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>East Asia and Pacific</th>
<th>Europe &amp; Central Asia</th>
<th>Latin America &amp; Caribbean</th>
<th>North America</th>
<th>South Asia</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa</th>
<th>No data</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Internet Usage**

The vast majority of youth and young adult respondents (97%) indicated that they regularly use the internet. They reported using the internet to get information, for social media, and to study/learn. Respondents reported accessing the internet via computer and/or mobile.

Since the youth survey was exclusively offered online, it is expected that those who responded would regularly use the internet. For any future surveys, it will be important to make the survey accessible to youth and young adults who do not regularly access the internet.

**Findings**

The findings of the surveys highlight a number of key trends and gaps that can be used to inform and strengthen leadership and mentoring opportunities for young people with disabilities.

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Leadership and Mentoring Opportunities

Almost half of all organizations (49%) offer leadership and/or mentoring opportunities to both youth with and without disabilities. Fifty-one percent (51%) offer opportunities only to people with disabilities, and no respondents offer opportunities only to youth without disabilities.

Chart 2: Does your organization provide leadership and/or mentoring opportunities for:

While 9% of organizations do not offer any type of mentoring opportunities, a variety of mentoring activities are taking place across the other 91% of programs, including the following:

1. A range of group mentoring (23%), one-to-one (20%) mentoring, and informal mentoring (20%) activities are offered by organizations.

2. Only 3% of organizations introduced role models as part of their leadership training; according to the youth survey, this approach has been overwhelmingly endorsed by young people as having been the most helpful in demonstrating leadership skills.

3. Interestingly, e-mentoring initiatives, which entail potentially lower cost and time commitments, are not offered through any of the organizations surveyed.

Inclusion of People with Disabilities in Programming Offerings

All programs identified in the survey include people with disabilities in their programming, with 51% reporting that they offer programming exclusively to people with disabilities and 49% reporting that they offer programming to people with and without disabilities. Over half (54%) highlight disability as a focus area for their organization. However, only 12% of organizations said leadership and mentoring is a focus. The majority of organizations engage with persons with different types of disabilities (rather than being focused on a particular impairment group). Few organizations only work with people with visual impairments (14%) or hard of hearing/Deaf (11%). The majority of organizations have a cross-disability
focus with two thirds of respondents (66%) working with young people with all disabilities.

**Partnerships**
A range of partnerships have been developed to deliver youth programs, with the largest subset (30%) partnering with the government.

**Engagement Based on Gender**
The majority of organizations reported that the gender of participants doesn’t make a difference in their ability to engage in programs. On average 47% of leadership/mentoring programs are being used by girls and young women. However, female respondents and those living in low and middle income countries are more likely to feel disadvantaged compared to their non-disabled counterparts when it comes to accessing leadership and training opportunities. In addition, 31% of organizations find it more difficult to engage girls and young women, compared with only 3% reporting the same for boys and young men.

**Chart 3: Do you find it more difficult to engage?**

![Chart showing engagement based on gender]

![Only 10% of respondents felt that their gender limits their participation in training or leadership opportunities; however, there is disparity between female and male respondents. Sixteen percent (16%) of female respondents felt that gender limits their participation compared to only 3% of males.]

**Challenges that Organizations Face**
For 62% of organizations, funding constraints are the most common barrier to including people with disabilities in their programs. Despite the intention to serve people
with disabilities, only about 9% of organizations indicated that they experience no challenges to including people with disabilities. The remaining respondents identified the following barriers: lack of accessibility of venues/offices, lack of accessible transportation, lack of staff training on disability, lack of knowledge on how to identify/engage people with disabilities, staff are not receptive, funding constraints/expense, and the curriculum is not accessible.

**Chart 4: What are the challenges to including people with disabilities in your programming?**

**Addressing the Challenges to Inclusion**

Organizations identified a number of supporting factors that would improve their ability to include and engage people with disabilities. These included disability training for staff, support for the identification and inclusion of youth with disabilities, funding, physically accessible locations, accessible transportation options, and accessible materials.

Organizations offered a number of suggestions to improve their disability inclusion:

1. When asked what would help their organization better engage youth with disabilities the most popular answer was funding (71%).

2. Half of organizations (50%) want support in identifying and including youth with disabilities while almost the same number (47%) said they would benefit from disability training for their staff.

3. Accessibility, in terms of transport (56%), venues (47%) and materials (47%), featured prominently.

4. The need for more role models in leadership positions was also highlighted.
Chart 5: What would help your organization better engage youth with disabilities in your program?

The youth needs assessment highlighted a number of issues related to leadership opportunities. Below is an overview of youth responses, along with statements from youth pulled from the survey questions.

**Opportunities to be a Leader**

The majority (79%) of youth and young adults reported that they have had the opportunity to be a leader. While almost 80% of young people reported that they had the opportunity to be a leader, only 50% have received leadership training to support their development. It should be noted that the sample size for low and lower middle income countries is small and is likely skewed due to the internet access requirement in order to take the survey.

Youth respondents reported a number of factors that have helped them demonstrate their own leadership skills, including meeting role models, family support, education, and networking opportunities.

Chart 6: In your own life, what has helped you most to demonstrate a leadership skill?
Barriers to Becoming a Leader

Despite the fact that many respondents reported having similar opportunities for education, training, and learning as their non-disabled peers, respondents identified a number of barriers that have prevented them from becoming a leader, including fear of violence/stigma, laws that stop/limit youth with disabilities, not being included in decision making processes, lack of experience or skills, level of education, lack of accessible infrastructure and information & communication technology (ICT), language and communication. Of these, lack of experience or skills was the most common response, with just over 50% reporting this as a barrier to becoming a leader.

Chart 7: Have you experienced any barriers to become a leader?

I have had challenges becoming a leader with non-disabled people, who would underestimate me because of my disability, and wouldn’t allow me to be a leader. But I have had support and encouragement as a leader with persons with disabilities. What influences me is the ability to bring a change in the perception of people towards persons with disabilities, and to motivate youth with disabilities to prove their potentiality to the non-disabled so as to prove that they are worthy of standing equal to them.
I was influenced as a leader by people who lead within a small scale, but refuse to let that be an excuse to stop caring about leading properly. Those people are people like teachers, parents, and even some student leaders who tend to stay in the background, but play important roles in their respective group.

**Factors that Would Support Youth to Become Leaders**

A range of approaches were highlighted that would help young people become leaders in the future. Role models and mentors (63%) was the most common, but over half of respondents also identified a need for education (60%), family support (57%) and leadership training (53%).

While a majority of youth (60%) identified education as an important factor to becoming a potential leader, 35% of youth with disabilities surveyed did not feel they had the same opportunity to get education or training compared to their non-disabled peers. This figure rises to 48% of those living in low and middle income countries.

**Chart 8: Which of the following would best help you to become a potential leader?**

Growing up with such a strong role model, I developed many of her enthusiasms. I not only came to love the excitement of learning simply for the sake of knowing something new, but I also came to understand the idea of giving back to the community in exchange for a new sense of life, love, and spirit.
Chart 9: Do you think that you have had the same opportunities to get education, trainings or to learn as youth without disabilities?

Over half of respondents (51%) said they had the same opportunities to access education and training compared to their non-disabled peers.

**Recommendations**

The survey findings highlight critical issues for young people with disabilities to access leadership and mentoring opportunities and to become leaders in their communities, countries, regions and potential on a global scale. The findings can be used to create a roadmap for making systemic change. In order for youth with disabilities to have the same pathway to leadership as nondisabled youth, youth with disabilities must be included side by side with nondisabled youth in local, national, and international youth leadership initiatives. In addition, we know that it is equally important to have mentors and role models with disabilities and leadership programs specifically for youth with disabilities. Based on the survey findings, the following recommendations include mainstreaming strategies as well as disability-targeted strategies for developing strong young leaders with disabilities: **Adapt or design mainstream youth programs to be inclusive.**

Organizations facing barriers to inclusion of youth with disabilities can use the following practical tips to ensure youth with disabilities are able to participate. Here are some essential strategies:

- **Make offices, meeting spaces, and program facilities and services accessible.** Build or renovate facilities according to universal design to ensure access for all people, including those with disabilities.

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7 Many of the recommendations included here are adapted from MIUSA’s tipsheet “Making Inclusive Development a Reality”: [http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/inclusivedevelopment](http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/inclusivedevelopment)
• **Make information inclusive of and accessible for persons with disabilities.** Use disability-friendly terminology and adapt activities to be suitable for all participants. Produce materials in alternative formats to ensure it is accessible for all readers. This might include recorded information, easy-to-read formats, sign language, Braille, etc.

• **Budget for inclusion.** Funding for disability-related accommodations has to be an integral part of the budget and should be secured at the planning and design stage (whether a youth with a disability signs up for the program or not). Plan for the cost of reasonable accommodations (3-5% for program costs and 1-3% for administrative costs is a good estimate) in program and organizational budgets, to ensure that program participants with disabilities can benefit fully and employees with disabilities can do their jobs effectively.

• **Train staff on inclusion and the human rights model of disability** at the headquarters level and also in field offices. Disability inclusion should be incorporated as part of mandatory staff training for organizations. For staff who design youth programming, provide information on how to apply concepts of universal design and adapt for different participant needs.

• **Form relationships and partnerships with local Disabled People’s Organizations (DPOs)** and invite them to participate in program planning and implementation. Develop a contact list of DPOs and women with disabilities’ organizations.

• **Ask for input from youth with disabilities** in the design, implementation and evaluation of both inclusive and disability-focused programs.

• **Conduct outreach to youth with disabilities.** Since youth with disabilities may not automatically show up or apply to be participants of youth programs, conduct targeted outreach to encourage the participation of youth with disabilities. Local DPOs are invaluable resources for identifying youth with disabilities in community. Work with families of youth with disabilities in outreach strategies to educate them about the importance of youth with disabilities’ participation.

• **Recruit youth with disabilities as staff, interns, volunteers, advisory board members, and board members.** Youth with disabilities should have opportunities to contribute their skills and gain valuable work experience.

• **Use inclusive marketing and outreach strategies, including images of youth with disabilities in your promotional materials** to show the diverse populations that your organization and programs should serve. Ensure your website, outreach and marketing materials are all accessible.

• **Monitor and report on the inclusion of youth with disabilities in program results.** Collect information on youth with disabilities participation and disaggregate by disability and gender to monitor and assess if and how people with disabilities are participating in programs. This information can also demonstrate the diversity and effectiveness of the organizational reach. Access MIUSA’s tipsheet Making Inclusive Development a Reality: [http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/inclusivedevelopment](http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/inclusivedevelopment)

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• **Move from inclusion to “infiltration.”** Encourage youth with disabilities not to wait for youth programs to start being inclusive. Youth with disabilities should take a proactive approach and join the hundreds of already established youth programs that exist around the world. Infiltration is a win-win for everyone, and many organizations that are not specifically disability-focused (i.e. “mainstream” organizations) are spearheading reverse infiltration by seeking out and finding disability-led groups and women with disabilities-led groups to be sure that everyone is included in their own programs. Learn more about the infiltration strategy: [http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/infiltrate](http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/infiltrate)

• **Provide positive mentors and role models for youth with disabilities.** Mentors and role models can break down preconceived notions for what is possible, challenge stereotypes and change community perceptions. There are many adults and youth with disabilities who can serve as mentors and role models. They are leading change as social entrepreneurs, citizen diplomats and community activists. Organizations and individuals can share resources and links that portray people with disabilities as positive role models, e.g., MIUSA’s Brilliant & Resilient photo exhibit and book highlights the achievements and personal stories of 50 women activists with disabilities from 41 countries: [http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/brilliantresilient](http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/brilliantresilient).

• **Support disability rights policy, legislation and advocacy** and engage youth with disabilities in these efforts. In order for youth with disabilities to advocate for their rights, they must fully understand their human rights to participate in all aspects of society. MIUSA’s Global Disability RightsNow! Project provides principles, strategies and best practices of enforcing disability rights laws and policies: [http://www.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/](http://www.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/)

• **Use the internet, social media, software adaptations and other technological innovations** to create opportunities for youth with disabilities to break down barriers and increase their sense of belonging and interaction with their peers. Learn how mobile app technology is being used for disability rights advocacy around the world: [http://www.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/tools/vietnam/using-mobile-applications-advocacy](http://www.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/tools/vietnam/using-mobile-applications-advocacy)

• **Empower youth with disabilities through sport and recreation programs.** Sports programs can build teamwork skills and provide leadership opportunities to youth with disabilities, as well as giving them an opportunity to find potential role models and mentors in their communities.
  • Provide adaptive sports and recreation programs for skill-building, competition, and fun.
  • Reach out to non-disability sport, recreation and fitness professionals to partner, collaborate and share their expertise with youth with disabilities.
  • Train physical educators to adapt activities to include students with and without disabilities.
  • Partner with community groups to make parks and playgrounds accessible, and provide opportunities for youth with and without disabilities to play together.

Learn how an organization in Armenia is using sports as an avenue for disability advocacy: [http://www.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/impact/armenia/sports-avenue-disability-advocacy](http://www.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/impact/armenia/sports-avenue-disability-advocacy)
• **Prioritize women and girls with disabilities:** In all strategies mentioned, ensure that there is equal participation for both boys/men and girls/women. Given that the findings show more female respondents felt that gender limited their participation, this requires that women and girls with disabilities be prioritized — from outreach and recruitment efforts to planning and implementation. They should be included as staff, volunteers, decision makers, role models, mentors and beneficiaries. For more tips on ensuring inclusion of women and girls with disabilities:

• **Make education a priority:** Education is critical to helping youth with disabilities become leaders in their communities, but as the survey showed many youth with disabilities (particularly in low and middle income countries) do not have the same access to education as youth without disabilities.
  - Join and support parents to advocate for youth with disabilities to have equal access to quality education.
  - Teach parents and youth with disabilities about their right to education.
  - Work with teachers and education professionals to find creative solutions to successfully include youth with disabilities in schools.
  - Encourage youth with disabilities to stay in school, and support university students with disabilities to advocate for access and to succeed in higher education, including study abroad opportunities.
  - Lobby policymakers to ensure that inclusive education legislation is developed and/or implemented and resources provided to make schools inclusive.

The Global Campaign for Education is an international coalition of non-governmental organizations, working to promote young people’s and adult education through research and advocacy:

• **Encourage youth with disabilities to participate in international exchange programs.**
  International experience and cultural exchange builds independence, competence, and confidence for leadership. There is a world of opportunities available to youth to study and volunteer abroad. Encourage youth with disabilities to learn another language, and to expand future opportunities for study, career and leadership opportunities. MIUSA’s National Clearinghouse on Disability and Exchange provides free information on international exchange for people with disabilities:
  [www.miusa.org/ncde](http://www.miusa.org/ncde)
• **Share the impact of model youth leadership programs.** Explore opportunities to replicate and scale up these programs (including both mainstream programs and disability-targeted programs). Examples of successful youth programs could be found on the resource page. This survey can serve as a catalyst for implementing real change so that every young person with a disability has the opportunity to participate side-by-side with their nondisabled peers throughout the world. In addition, there should be more disability-led and disability-focused youth programs to ensure that a pipeline of leaders with disabilities is created that the world so desperately needs.

**Resources**

MIUSA's tipsheets:

- “The Power of Disabled Women Activists”
  
  http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/inclusivewomen

- “Making Inclusive Development a Reality”
  
  http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/inclusivedevelopment

- “Moving from Inclusion to Infiltration”
  
  http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/infiltrate

- “Celebrating the Brilliant and Resilient Photo Exhibit”
  
  http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/brilliantresilient

- National Clearinghouse on Disability & Exchange
  
  http://www.miusa.org/ncde

International Disability Rights:

- **Global Disability Rights Now**
  
  http://www.globaldisabilityrightsnow.org/

- **The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**
  

- **UNICEF, “Take Us Seriously! Engaging Children with Disabilities in Decisions Affecting their Lives”**
  
  https://www.unicef.org/disabilities/files/Take_Us_Seriously.pdf

Education:

- **Global Campaign for Education**
  
  http://campaignforeducationusa.org/

- **World Education, Inc.** is dedicated to improving the lives of the poor through education and social and economic development programs.  
  
  www.worlded.org
Youth-Serving Organizations:

- **Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) and Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and Study (YES) programs.** These U.S. Department of State sponsored high school exchange programs include youth with and without disabilities. Explore disability inclusion in the FLEX and YES Programs: [http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/flexandyesinfographics](http://www.miusa.org/resource/tipsheet/flexandyesinfographics)

- **The National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth (NCLD/Y) serves as a national youth-led information, training, and resource center. NCLD/Y has a four-pronged focus on working on developing leaders, developing the capacity of centers for independent living to serve those leaders, the capacity of the staff working directly with the leaders, and supporting the cadre of youth with disabilities-related organizations.** [http://ncld-youth.info/index.php?id=01](http://ncld-youth.info/index.php?id=01)

- **Partners for Youth (PYD) mentoring programs:** PYD offers one-on-one, group and online mentoring for youth with disabilities. [https://www.pyd.org/group-mentoring.php](https://www.pyd.org/group-mentoring.php)

- **Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD) is Mobility International USA’s signature leadership and empowerment program for emerging women leaders with disabilities.** [http://www.miusa.org/wild](http://www.miusa.org/wild)

- **U.S. International Council on Disability (USICD)'s Youth in Development** is a paid internship program focusing on preparing youth with disabilities for careers in international development [http://usicd.org/template/page.cfm?id=257](http://usicd.org/template/page.cfm?id=257)

- **VSA International,** the international organization on arts and disability, was founded more than 35 years ago by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith to provide arts and education opportunities for people with disabilities and increase access to the arts for all. [https://vsainternational.wordpress.com/](https://vsainternational.wordpress.com/)

- **Leonard Cheshire’s Young Voices program** trained youth with disabilities to understand the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and builds their leadership and communication skills. A successor to this program, building the understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to monitor disability-inclusion, is currently underway. [http://lcdyoungvoices.tumblr.com/](http://lcdyoungvoices.tumblr.com/)

Organizations of Persons with Disabilities:


- **International Disability Alliances (IDA) -** alliance of networks. IDA brings together over 1,100 organizations of persons with disabilities and their families from across eight global and six regional networks. IDA works across the United Nations to make sure its human rights and sustainable development processes uphold the highest standards of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - the CRPD. IDA also supports DPOs to have the opportunity to empower themselves in their local, national, regional and global advocacy. [http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/capacity-building](http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/capacity-building)
Employment Programs:

- **Workability International** champions the right to work of any person who has a disability or is otherwise marginalized. http://www.workability-international.com/

Photo Credit: UNICEF/UNI130238/Pirozzi