



LMG Project Supports “WILD Women” Leaders with Disabilities

USAID-funded project works with MIUSA to strengthen an important leadership initiative

Twenty-six disabled women activists from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Middle East attended the 6th International Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD) in Eugene, Oregon, from August 5-27, 2012 organized by non-profit organization Mobility International USA (MIUSA). Embracing the “Loud, Proud and Passionate®” theme, WILD women participated in the leadership development program designed to strengthen themselves personally and professionally as community, national, and world leaders on disability.

The USAID-funded Leadership, Management, and Governance (LMG) project is working to support MIUSA to ensure the effectiveness of this important leadership program. LMG is currently assisting MIUSA in documenting and demonstrating the accomplishments of WILD participants once they have participated in the program. Over the next six months, LMG and MIUSA staff will be working together to support the WILD women during implementation of their action plans developed during the institute to achieve their organizational goals, and to document their accomplishments once their action plans have been completed. LMG will also assist MIUSA to conduct WILD participant evaluations three and six months after the program. The results of the evaluation will be used to improve the delivery of WILD in 2013.

During the 2012 conference, attended by LMG staff, “WILD women” delegates from 26 countries participated in a series of intensive seminars and site visits, improved their media skills, and learned to better advocate for and implement policy and legislation, network with international organizations, and improve access to employment and educational opportunities for people with disabilities. Delegates also participated in team-building activities such as an outdoor challenge course and river rafting, and experienced different aspects of U.S. culture by staying with local families.

The activists, representing diverse disabilities, brought expertise in fields such as policy, education, health, social work, media, HIV/AIDS, and violence prevention. LMG is working with MIUSA to assist the 26 delegates to implement their individual action plans over the next six months upon returning to their countries. The focus areas of the action plans are as diverse as the participants.

WILD participant Geannina Ramirez Hidalgo, for example, works as the Board Secretary and coordinator of the Mental Health Committee of the Deaf Costa Rica National Association, which promotes the equal rights of Deaf people on the national level. Through her work with the Mental Health Committee, Geannina has facilitated workshops with women who are Deaf that focus on sexuality, domestic violence and women’s empowerment, nutrition, preventing breast cancer. Says Hidalgo, “One of the things we are currently working on is to provide information on the prevention of domestic violence and sexual abuse, as well as issues related to sexuality knowing that many women don’t have an enabling environment to be able to handle these situations. We are working with them to motivate them first by providing them with good information so that with this information they will have the power to get themselves out.”

WILD participant Annoncee Nyirangarukiyintwari of Rwanda will work with her organization to translate to Kinyarwanda, her local language, the sections on sexual and reproductive health of the Hesperian Foundation publication A Health Handbook for Women with Disabilities. She will then use the translation to initially provide sexual and reproductive health information to 15 disabled women. Julien Zimba of Zambia will develop and conduct a media campaign to disseminate recent legislation in her country on protection of the rights of disabled persons. She anticipates reaching 10 million Zambians by television and 2 million by radio. Hanan Mohsen Ibrahim Aly of Egypt intends to improve the quantity and quality of sign language interpreters for people who are deaf in her home country. Mariana Tibulac of Moldova will produce an informational bulletin on the lives of women with disabilities in Moldova and distribute it to 64 NGOs and CSOs who work with women with disabilities, as well as to government agencies.

The WILD program was made possible by: a grant from the Open Society Foundations; implementation by Mobility International USA; the sponsorship of local businesses and families in Eugene and Springfield, Oregon, USA; and the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), with technical support provided by the LMG project.

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