

A new life for Reynane three years after the Haiti earthquake

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Armless pilot inspires children with disabilities in Ethiopia

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Educating Americans about landmines in Maryland

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Caring for the most vulnerable victims of the Syria crisis

NEWS

Millions of people have fled their homes to escape the conflict in Syria, and they are in desperate need of humanitarian aid. Others are trapped, unable to flee, due to the intense fighting around them. They require immediate assistance. The United Nations is describing it as the biggest refugee crisis since the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

In addition to aiding Syrian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan, Handicap International is among a handful of international charities working inside the country of Syria, where the needs are overwhelming. Our teams are accustomed to working in theaters of war, but staff members say they have never before experienced this level of brutality. Indeed, we believe that disabilities caused by injuries will be one serious legacy of this crisis.

Individual cases are harrowing. Nine-year-old Esraa was shot by a sniper while she sat drinking tea. In March, she took her first steps with the support of one of our physical therapists. Esraa is growing stronger, and orthopedic leg braces made at a workshop supported by Handicap International give mobility and some independence. However, she will never walk again without support.

Syrians are also falling victim to the fighting when attempting to flee. A 16-year-old girl named Najah was hit in the crossfire while trying to cross the border into Lebanon. Now a paraplegic, she receives rehabilitation from Handicap International's teams.

And unconscionably, cluster munitions have been used in areas with a high population density. On March 1, 2013, a cluster bomb released munitions over a residential neighborhood at 11:30 a.m., when children were playing outside in gardens. The attack exacted a heavy toll—at least 19 people were killed and 60 were injured. Unexploded cluster munitions will continue to pose a lethal threat to civilian lives for many years to come after the fighting is over.

Thanks to your support, more than 250 Handicap International staff members are on the ground where we're needed most as conflict rages in Syria, delivering direct assistance to thousands of innocent victims caught up in the crossfire and dreaming of a day when their lives will return to normal.



Photo: Handicap International physical therapist Omar performs exercises with a young Syrian boy with cerebral palsy in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley.

Mine Ban Treaty update



Handicap International is calling on the Obama administration to join the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. The life-saving treaty has 161 States Parties, but countries including China, Iran, Russia, Syria and the U.S. have yet to join.

More than 1.1 million people have signed Handicap International petitions pushing for the eradication of landmines

since 1995. In the past months, the charity has collected more than 50,000 signatures on a petition urging President Obama to submit the treaty to the Senate for ratification.

The U.S. has millions of anti-personnel mines stockpiled but it has neither used antipersonnel mines since 1991, nor has it produced new ones since 1997. The U.S. is the

only member of NATO and the only country in the western hemisphere, aside from Cuba, that has not joined the treaty.

The Obama administration, which has been reviewing the treaty since 2009, is expected to make an announcement about the review in November 2013.

Speaking out on Syria



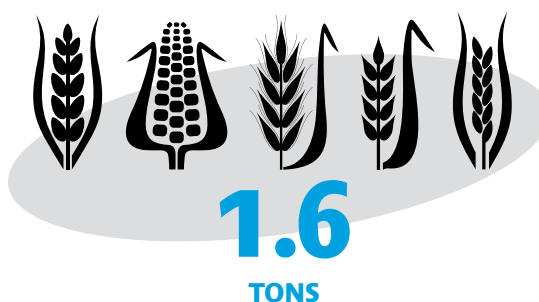
In addition to delivering humanitarian aid to victims, Handicap International is urgently calling on all parties to the Syrian conflict to respect the international ban on the use of cluster munitions and other indiscriminate weapons, and to allow humanitarian aid to flow throughout Syria.

Emergency response in Mali



Ten months after French and Malian troops led an intervention against armed groups in Mali, displaced Malians are still suffering the consequences of the conflict. Handicap International teams are clearing weapons, providing prosthetic limbs to amputees and mental health support to traumatized people, while also educating the local population about the risks posed by explosive remnants of war. More than 100,000 people have heard our safety messages since November 2012.

Bomb clearance in Laos yields results for farmers



When Handicap International teams clear explosive remnants of war from one acre of land in Laos, local farmers can in turn produce 1.6 tons of grain such as rice, maize, barley, oats, and millet. Laos is the most heavily cluster bomb-polluted country in the world.

Mozambique to be mine-free by 2014

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Handicap International has been working in Mozambique since 1986 responding to issues resulting from the country's 25-year-long civil war. When peace agreements were signed the country was able to begin recovering. However, the landmines still lodged in the country's soil posed a deadly threat.

Mozambique was one of the most landmine-riddled countries in the world, but,

thanks to the support of friends like you, Handicap International has been clearing the country of explosive devices for more than a decade. Our teams of deminers and their specially trained landmine detection dogs are on track to finish securing all of Mozambique's land and declare the country mine-free in 2014.

With your ongoing support, these mine clearance experts are proudly carrying out their work,



Photo: Deminer Noberto and his German Shepard partner Usko work to clear a mine field in Mozambique.

cautious step by cautious step, until every acre of the country is safe to walk, farm,

or construct much-needed schools, clinics, and other community facilities.

Note from the Executive Director



As a valued friend of Handicap International, I hope you'll find this inaugural issue of The Next Step informative and illustrative of how your generous support is put to use and what an important impact you have on people's lives.

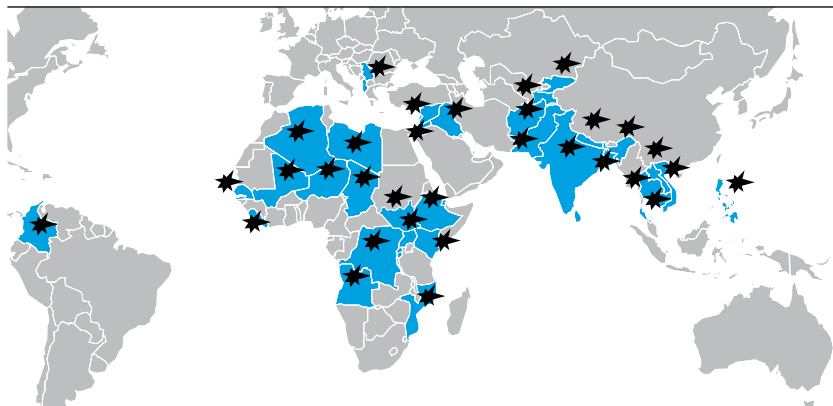
As you will see, for every landmine survivor who can walk again, for every community that has its land cleared of unexploded weapons, and for every vulnerable individual who receives our care and assistance, your generosity is a gift beyond words.

Since our founding in 1982, when we first reached out to help Cambodian amputees living in refugee camps along the Thai border, to today's expanded mission across 60 countries, this work has always had people like you at its center. You share in all of our achievements and in the process of making the world safer for humanity.

Thank you for being part of this remarkable, absolutely vital endeavor. We cannot do it without you!

Beth MacNairn
Executive Director

RESPONDING TO ARMED VIOLENCE AROUND THE WORLD



39★
countries where Handicap International works with victims of armed violence



Armed violence kills one person every minute around the world

2
MILLION people live with disabilities as a result of armed violence

Afghanistan / Albania / Algeria / Angola / Bangladesh / Burundi / Cambodia / Colombia / Ethiopia / India / Iraq / Jordan / Kenya / Kyrgyzstan / Lebanon / Liberia / Libya / Mali / Mozambique / Nepal / Niger / Uganda / Pakistan / Philippines / D.R. Congo / Laos / Rwanda / Senegal / Serbia / Sierra Leone / Somaliland / South Sudan / Sri Lanka / Syria / Tajikistan / Chad / Palestinian Territories / Thailand / Vietnam – Source: Handicap International

A new life for Reynane three years after the Haiti earthquake



THE BIG PICTURE

← One year later

Reynane's leg was crushed when Haiti was hit by a devastating earthquake in 2010. Thanks to friends like you, Handicap International was able to fit her with a prosthetic leg and here, just one year later, she's not only back on her feet, she's enjoying jumping on her parents' bed alongside her twin sister.



➤ Going to school

While perfectly capable of getting around on her own these days, it's too far for Reynane to walk to school, so her father takes her and her sister by motorcycle. A model student who is fully integrated and accepted by other kids at school, Reynane aspires to be a teacher when she grows up.

Three years later→

Reynane is 12 today, and very grateful for her prosthesis and rehabilitation care that friends like you helped provide so she could make a full recovery and resume an active, happy childhood. While she wears pants instead of the uniform skirt at school, she loves her new leg—so much so that she sleeps with it on. "Everyone sleeps with their feet," Reynane explains, "so I do, too!"





Photo: Jessica Cox meets with Hodan Abdulkadir, who was hidden at home for 16 years because of her disabilities, but now goes to school.

Ethiopia: inspiring action for children with disabilities



World's first armless pilot and Handicap International Goodwill Ambassador speaks out on the importance of educating children with disabilities

IN THE FIELD

Jessica Cox, the world's first person without arms to earn a pilot's license, traveled to Ethiopia this past spring to visit Handicap International's inclusive education program and to raise awareness about the importance of educating children with disabilities.

In Ethiopia, an estimated 4.8 million children have a disability but only 3% go to school due to pervasive discrimination against people with disabilities, inaccessible schools, and a lack of special education resources and teachers.

"These children are often viewed as being the result of the sins of their mothers and are hidden at home because their parents do not believe they have a future," says Desalegn Meberatu of Handicap International Ethiopia.

Only 3% of children with disabilities in Ethiopia receive a primary school education.

Last year, Handicap International launched a pilot project in six Ethiopian schools to bring children with disabilities to school. Handicap International worked to make schools accessible for students with special needs, trained teachers, and provided each school with a disability resource center. Staff members also reached out to parents to encourage them to send their children with disabilities to school.

Thanks to significant media coverage of her visit and her meetings with government officials,

Jessica was met by cheering crowds of up to 2,000 people at each of the schools she visited.

"I was amazed by how Ethiopians, both those with and without disabilities, embraced me and my messages about the importance of including people with disabilities," says Jessica. "It seems the country is ready for change. I was really touched by the life stories of the students I met. They were so happy to be learning and finally dream about a better future for themselves."

Hidden for 16 years, Hodan now goes to school

BENEFICIARY STORY

At 17 years old, Hodan Abdulkadir (pictured above with Jessica Cox) is not the typical grade 1 student. Tall and slender, she sits head and shoulders higher than her classmates. As the teacher writes on the chalkboard, Hodan copies the characters in her notebook. She looks at what she has written, checks that it matches the teacher's writing, and then softly reads her characters aloud. A smile breaks over her face as she hears her own

voice transform those hesitantly drawn characters into words and sentences.

Months earlier, Hodan was illiterate and could barely speak in full sentences. Born with multiple disabilities, Hodan was kept inside her family's small house in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, and did not venture outside. Her parents, who struggle to make a living, saw no hope for their disabled daughter.

"A few months ago, I led a training at the Afetisa School, emphasizing the importance of educating children with disabilities," says Abraham Seleshi, program officer for Handicap

International. "At the meeting, a man told me he had a daughter named Hodan with disabilities at home, and that he had never sent her to school. After many meetings, he realized that he must educate his daughter so she could have a better future."

Hodan has been transformed. "I am so happy, I am learning how to read and write," she says.

"She talks all the time and smiles," says Hibo Adan, Hodan's mother. "Because she is up and walking, she is also getting physically stronger. I can imagine a future for her now."

Opportunity starts with education



Jessica Cox reflects on her visit to Ethiopia in April 2013

Leading up to my trip to Ethiopia, my brain was filled with statistics about children with disabilities, but it just does not compare to what I was about to witness.

I was very aware of the problems that children with disabilities face, but it was beyond my understanding how it is possible to tackle an issue of this magnitude. I learned from Handicap International that it has to start at the fundamental level of education. Opportunity has to start at the very beginning of a person's life.

It makes perfect sense. Had I not been given the opportunity to go to school, I would not have had the foundation I needed later to become a pilot, to own my own business, or to support myself financially. So many opportunities in my life would not have been possible without first being able to read and write.

I was able to witness with my own eyes the work of Handicap International. After seeing the work in the schools and the impact on the parents and children, I am a firm believer in the effectiveness of the work Handicap International is doing. I will never forget many of the things the children shared with me. The parting words from one of the students I met were very passionate. She said, "Send your children with disabilities to school!"

Background

Geography

Ethiopia is located in eastern Africa. It is bordered by Somalia in the east, Kenya to the south, North and South Sudan to the west, and Eritrea to the north. Its capital city is Addis Ababa.

History

The country has since experienced repeated bouts of war, drought, famine, and refugee crises along its borders. Although Ethiopia ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007, an overall lack of inclusion and accessibility, and persistent stigmas attached to disability make life very challenging for people with disabilities. Handicap International has worked in Ethiopia since 1986.

Mandate

Handicap International's activities are focused around three key areas: controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS, providing functional rehabilitation, and defending the rights of persons with disabilities. To carry out its mandate in Ethiopia, Handicap International employs nearly 60 field staff in the country.

Beneficiaries

In 2011, more than 34,000 Ethiopians benefitted from Handicap International's program.

Jessica Cox encourages Senators to ratify the Disability Rights Treaty

ADVOCACY

After visiting Ethiopia and witnessing a society just beginning to embrace disability rights, Jessica Cox has devoted herself to seeing the U.S. join the disability treaty.

Jessica's trip with Handicap International not only left her inspired, it transformed her into a disability rights advocate. During her time in Ethiopia, Jessica learned that children with disabilities are now able to go to school in part because in 2007 the country ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities or the CRPD. This treaty helped the government to create Ethiopia's first disability rights laws.

The CRPD was modeled on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and has been ratified by more than 130 countries—but not the U.S. In December 2012, the CRPD was up for ratification in the Senate but it came up five votes short.

"I was shocked when I learned that the U.S. has not ratified the treaty," says Jessica. "I saw what a difference the CRPD makes in the lives of children with disabilities in Ethiopia and I know from my own experience how the ADA made it possible for me to go to school and have the same opportunities as everyone else. After studying the



Photo: Jessica Cox and her husband Patrick Chamberlain in front of the U.S. Capitol.

CRPD and realizing that it would not change any U.S. laws, my husband Patrick and I decided we had to help make the ratification of the treaty by the U.S. a reality."

Jessica and Patrick visited Washington, D.C., in June and September to encourage U.S. Senators to support the ratification of the CRPD. The treaty could be up for another vote as early as December. Jessica was able to convince five key Republican Senators and the legislative affairs staff of seven other Senators to sit down and have a conversation.

"I shared my personal experience and that of the children with

disabilities I met in Ethiopia, and explained how we all benefited from the U.S.'s pioneering disability laws," says Jessica. "I asked them to reaffirm this country's position as the world's leader in disability rights. More than 700 U.S. organizations, including disability, veterans, and faith-based groups, support the CRPD, so voting yes should be the clear choice."

While these Senators are still reviewing the treaty, Handicap International and other organizations have been collecting signatures for petitions urging Senators to vote YES on the CRPD.

**Please urge your Senators to support the CRPD.
Sign our petition: bit.ly/YESonCRPD**

Staff educate public about landmines

Demining demonstrations show the public how landmines can lay hidden on seemingly safe-looking ground and the painstaking process involved in clearing the weapons. On October 6, Handicap International U.S. staff hosted demining demonstrations and an information booth at a popular Maryland festival. The Takoma Park Street Festival is an annual event on the doorstep of Handicap International's U.S. headquarters.

While staff demonstrated demining in a miniature mine field, others educated the public about our projects clearing weapons in 14 countries. We were happy to welcome several new donors and collect signatures for our Mine Ban Treaty and Disability Treaty petitions.



Legacy Society

You can help assure that Handicap International remains a global leader in the effort to eliminate deadly landmines and unexploded ordnance and assist people with disabilities to reach their full human potential with your lasting gift of a bequest, annuity, or legacy contribution. As a member of our Legacy Society, you can extend your commitment to providing people with the tools to stand on their own again for generations to come. To learn more about including Handicap International in your will or estate plans, please check the information request box on the enclosed reply.

Staff view: Lebanon

Amid the chaos and suffering of the Syria crisis, Abeer Ameen, 23, a Handicap International physical therapist who works with injured refugees in Lebanon, still finds small joys in her daily work. "When a patient, who couldn't even get out of bed before, regains his independence as a result of my work, I am filled with pride and joy," says Abeer.

"Working in an emergency situation is a powerful experience. The injured often have multiple injuries, complex bullet fractures, and amputations. Almost all of the refugees assisted by Handicap International have not seen a doctor before meeting me.

"I spend a lot of time listening to my patients. They need a lot of emotional support to overcome the trauma

they have experienced. If patients feel better mentally, it makes a big difference to their physical recovery."

Abeer helps Syrians like 16-year-old Faraj, who sustained injuries to his spinal cord and left arm. Before meeting Abeer, Faraj couldn't sit up, but now he is learning to move on his own again. "I've got my confidence back," says Faraj.



Give the gift hope every month

As a Handicap International donor you are providing the necessary funds to help landmine victims and others with disabilities live full and hope-filled lives.

You can make your Handicap International support go even further by having a monthly gift charged to your credit card. This way your gift can be put to work immediately! There's also less paper, no postage costs, and it helps to reduce our administrative costs—so your gift can go directly where it's most needed. And of course, we'll send you special correspondence to keep you updated with the very latest details of our work.

If you would like take advantage of this convenient payment option, simply complete the enclosed reply.



Photo: Fymee, who lost her left leg in the Haiti earthquake, plays with a doll at Handicap International's rehabilitation center, where she was fitted with a prosthetic leg.