

DISABLED MEDIA CREATORS IN AFGHANISTAN, CHINA AND SOMALIA

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Introduction

In countries with fewer resources, people with disabilities are often the most vulnerable and hardest hit in society. The author of this chapter has been researching media and disability issues for almost 30 years, including working with Internews, an international media development organization for almost two decades. The chapter examines case studies from three countries, Afghanistan, China and Somalia, where the author has knowledge of the efforts of people with disabilities who work with media to advance disability rights and reduce stigma.

Due to decades of near constant conflict both Afghanistan and Somalia have high numbers of disabled people. In 2004 both were ranked in the top five countries in the world according to the World Health Organisation (WHO).¹ In Afghanistan, due to economics and ingrained prejudices, prospects for people with disabilities are not very bright. Many employers believe disabled people are incapable of being productive employees. Basic physical access is limited; 73 percent of persons with disabilities above six years of age do not receive any education.² In 2017, the Afghanistan Embassy in the U.S. sponsored an Afghan Disability Rights

Conference and strategized ways to better educate the Afghani public about disability, as well as creating better employment opportunities for disabled people there. With attention to media, the conference report said that to address the issue of stigma about disability in Afghanistan, they should advocate for “tribal leaders to use inclusive and respective language in all areas of Afghanistan through media campaigns.”³

China’s 1990 Laws on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, offer strong civil rights protections for disabled people, guaranteeing employment, education, welfare, and access, but in reality many Chinese disabled people are illiterate because of inaccessible education and struggle to find employment. Chinese Ph.D. student Dai Wangyun, who studies body culture and medical culture, says that the Chinese media cover disabled people in China in one of two contrasted ways. Firstly, there is the so-called “encouragement model” [...], which emphasizes people with disabilities “might be ‘broken in body, but strong in spirit’ and lauds exceptional individual efforts to achieve things despite their disabilities.”⁴ Secondly, there is “the hardship model, which depicts disabled people as physically frail victims of misfortune who need society’s help. This view imbues the culture around disabled people with a feeling of pity [...].”⁵ As Wangyun notes, the overarching issue is that “in both of these models, the vast majority of disabled people—commonplace individuals trying to live normal lives—are largely absent.”⁶

Digital technology in China provides one glimmer of hope for better access for Chinese disabled people. Goggin et al.’s 2018 research reports that China uses digital technology as a “lever”: “digital technology has already become a significant part of disability policy, as people

with disabilities seek employment and entrepreneurial opportunities through harnessing the power of information and communication (ICT) in China's growing digital economy.”⁷

According to a report published by Amnesty International in 2015, “More than two decades of conflict, inadequate health services and discrimination have left people with disabilities in Somalia at risk of forced marriage, violence, rape and repeated forced evictions.”⁸ Less than one percent of disabled children are enrolled in school there. The country is so poor and ravaged by war and poverty that attention only recently has turned to people with disabilities there. A British report by K4D research on disability in Somalia in 2018 did not mention media specifically but said, “lack of data on disability in Somalia has contributed to limited awareness of disability issues among policy makers, planners, community leaders, services providers and the general public,” and one could add the news media to this list.⁹

Grassroots efforts in these countries to alleviate discrimination include a nationwide radio program in Afghanistan focusing on disability issues, a radio station run by blind people in China and a disability rights NGO in Somalia that is working with the media to try to improve the visibility of people with disabilities:

- *Qahir-e-Qahraman* (Qahir the Champion) was a radio program produced in Afghanistan by two disabled journalists. More than 300 shows were produced, which were distributed to 40 radio stations across the country. The program is credited with moving the groundbreaking People with Disabilities law forward in 2010;¹⁰

- One Plus One, a radio station in China, produces programs that discuss topics such as the legal rights of disabled people, new assistive technology and how blind people can improve their life skills. The producers think it is essential that disabled people have their own, independent voice;
- In Somalia, Mohamed Ali Farah heads a disability rights organization that is working with a radio station to train disabled radio engineers and producers. Farah has also received training in media relations to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities in the media.

This chapter will examine these efforts in disability media in Afghanistan, China and Somalia in terms of their resourcefulness and impact on the disabled population.

Afghanistan: *Qahir-e-Qahraman* Radio Program

Amina Azimi was a young girl when she lost her right leg from a rocket-propelled grenade that landed near her home in Kabul. Her family took good care of her but did not want her to leave the house as they feared for her safety, and Amina was frustrated by the inactivity. Eventually, her mother helped her return to school but the teachers would not let her play with the other children.¹¹ In the community, people would say things like, “Death is better than being in this situation. When this happened to me and I became disabled, my hopes were almost gone by looking at myself and other people’s negative reactions,” Amina said in an interview. “I had to let my hopes go—I could not do what I had been planning to accomplish.”¹² Amina’s reaction

was not surprising considering the condition for people with disabilities in Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries in the world and difficult even for non-disabled people.

There are an estimated 1.5 million people with disabilities in Afghanistan. The 2006 National Disability Survey in Afghanistan (NDSA) reported that, based on an estimated population of 25 million people, there are more than 800,000 persons with severe disabilities in Afghanistan, of whom approximately 17 percent are war disabled.¹³ On average, one household in every five has a family member with a disability. Although Afghanistan has ratified the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and has its own law—Law on Rights and Privileges of Persons with Disabilities—in practice, people with disabilities are often discriminated against in education and employment, as well as socially. NDSA found that 53 percent of men with disabilities over the age of 15 years are unemployed compared to 25 percent of non-disabled men. (The unemployment rate for women is very high—94 percent of women without disability and 97 percent of women with disability). The NDSA also found that almost 73 percent of persons with disabilities above six years of age did not receive any education versus 51 percent for people without disability.¹⁴

When Amina went to look for work, she was asked, “Why are you seeking work, when those who are without disabilities are jobless?”¹⁵ She finally did find a job working as a secretary for Nafeesa Sultani, a woman with a disability who focuses on disabled women’s issues, especially employment, and is now the representative in the Afghanistan Parliament for people with disabilities. In 2007, Amina started the Women with Disabilities Advocacy Committee, where she worked as peer counselor and provided counseling to hundreds of women and girls

with disabilities, most of whom had remained hidden in their homes for years. In 2011, she created Empowering Women with Disabilities (EWD), which provides training to women and girls with disabilities and their families.¹⁶

Reaching out to others through radio

In 2017, only 34.7 percent of the total adult population in Afghanistan and 53.6 percent of young people aged 15–24 could read and write.¹⁷ According to the Asia Foundation, [while] the Internet is one of the fastest-growing sources of news and information in Afghanistan, increasing from 3.3 percent of respondents in 2013 to 16.8 percent in 2018, close to two-thirds (62.9 percent) of Afghans report using radio as their main source of news and information, just behind television (68.7 percent).¹⁸

During her time working with Sultani, Amina became involved as a presenter for a radio program, *Qahir-e-Qahraman* (“Qahir the Champion”), on disability issues started by UNDP’s National Programme for Action on Disability and later supported by the UN Mine Action Center for Afghanistan and Internews, a U.S.-based media development nonprofit organization. “The main focus of all the programs was to inform the public that people with disabilities are not weak,” said Amina of *Qahir-e-Qahraman*. “They are active members of society and should be treated like everyone else. Disability is not weakness.”¹⁹ The program often featured disabled people who were working or had their own businesses to serve as role models for the disabled listeners. “We always received good feedback from the listeners,” said Amina. “I talked to one

woman who said that before listening to the program, she didn't know that the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled existed. She was happy that there was a place she could go to get assistance.”²⁰

Eventually, the program became part of Internews' radio program production network Salam Watandar. Internews trained Amina in journalism skills and with two other disabled journalists, the team produced close to 300 weekly programs. The programs focused on news, drama and advice by and for people with disabilities and were produced and aired nationwide. “It is the voice of the disabled community,” senior producer Haji Nader told Internews in 2011. He had lost an arm in a rocket explosion 30 years ago while fighting the Soviets as a member of the Mujahedin. “We receive dozens of phone calls every week from people around the country thanking us for the information we give them.”²¹

One caller, Majid from Ghazni province, lost both legs in a mine explosion two years before. For more than a year following surgery at a local hospital, Majid stayed inside his house in his village, sinking into depression. He rarely left his home during the first year after the accident because he was afraid people would mock him.²² Then he heard *Qahir-I Qahraman* on Radio Ghaznawian, one of more than 40 local stations that air Salam Watandar's national programming. Over the following weeks, Majid listened to several more shows and learned about local disabled people learning new skills at a training and employment center set up by the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan.

Majid visited the center and enrolled in a tailoring class. After completing the course, he took a job as an assistant tailor at a local tailoring shop. Soon he opened his own shop, earning 800 to 1000 Afghanis a day, the equivalent of USD 16 to USD 20, well above the national per capita income.²³ “After I announced my personal mobile number on the show a couple of months ago, Majid immediately called to thank me and my colleagues for changing his life,” Haji Nader said.²⁴ “Six years ago, the disabled community decided that we should be given a chance to tell our story. And that’s what we’ll keep doing,” Haji said in a 2011 interview with *USA Today*.²⁵

Looking ahead

Unfortunately, funding for the radio program was cut.²⁶ For a while, the journalists produced the show with their own time and expense but currently the program is no longer on the air. For her part, Amina would like to get back into journalism and to provide information for people with disabilities, especially those in rural areas: “I would like to go to far-away provinces to meet with disabled people who have been isolated to inform them of their rights and what services are available to them.”²⁷ Today, she is waiting for the security situation to improve in Afghanistan and for funding to become available to produce more radio programming.

Amina now works as the project manager for the Afghan Landmine Survivors’ Organization (ALSO), spending her time supporting disabled people who survived injury from remnants of conflict, such as landmines and cluster munitions.²⁸ She continues to work with other women with disabilities both in Afghanistan and internationally, particularly in other Asian countries. As for her personal journey, Amina says, “Looking back I see a big difference. I’m happy and proud of all my accomplishments.”²⁹

China —A Radio Station and Disability Rights Organization Founded and Operated by People with Disabilities

China's 1990 Laws on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities offer strong civil rights protections for disabled people, guaranteeing employment, education, welfare, and access, but in reality much in Chinese society is still inaccessible. According to a 2013 report by Human Rights Watch, over 40 percent of disabled Chinese people are illiterate,³⁰ compared with less than five percent of the general population.³¹ The latest figures for employment published by the China Disabled Persons' Federation show a 67.5 percent employment rate for people with disabilities in 2014; 79.8 percent of those are in rural and agricultural employment.³²

The lack of social services in many areas, the lack of enforcement of disability rights laws and the stigma still attached to being disabled mean that many families do not believe they can care for a disabled child. Since China has relaxed its one-child policy and implemented "baby refuges," close to 90 percent of the children in institutional care are disabled, indicating that most abandoned children in China have a disability.³³

In rural areas, children with disabilities often are excluded from schools and, according to the National Bureau of Statistics of the People's Republic of China quoted in the Human Rights Watch report, 75 percent of China's disabled population live in rural areas. This has resulted in a 43 percent illiteracy rate among people with disabilities in China. Twenty-eight percent of children with disabilities cannot access basic education.³⁴

Disabled students who make it through high school have traditionally been barred from attending regular universities. The *gaokao*, China's competitive national college entrance exam, was not made accessible to the blind until 2014.³⁵ Still, even if a disabled student is able to pass the exam, they may be barred from attending university because of a “physical fitness test” that requires applicants be without impairments.

Two news stories in 2014 dominated coverage of the *gaokao* issue, one about a blind man who successfully petitioned to take the exam in Braille but wasn't able to pass it due to his poor Braille skills (he had asked to be provided with electronic access)³⁶ and another about a physically disabled young woman who passed the exam but then was rejected based on her disability.³⁷ Both stories generated a lot of debate online. Even with some negative reactions to the stories, disability rights advocates believed it was a positive step to get the issue out in the open. As in other countries, hosting the Paralympics seems to bring more visibility—and thus more media coverage—to disability. University of New South Wales professor Karen Fisher explained how the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing got Chinese citizens talking about disability in a positive way.³⁸ More recently, some Chinese people complained when Chinese Paralympians received little mainstream media coverage of their accomplishments; people took to social media to praise Chinese Paralympians in 2016.³⁹ “As far as the visual disability community is concerned, the debate about how to fight for the right to take the *gaokao* may soon be a thing of the past,” says Fu Gaoshan, editor-in-chief of Qishi Consulting in a report—*China Disability Observed 2014* (written in partnership with the UK NGO China Vision). Gaoshan wrote:

But when it comes to the entire disability community, the rights debate has only just begun. Even if it's only taking place with the disability community at the moment, this kind of discussion will inevitably take the debate about disabled people's right and interests even further."⁴⁰

One Plus One—the Voice of People with Disabilities

Qishi Consulting is part of One Plus One, a unique organization that is trying to change the situation for people with disabilities through a combination of media projects, job skills training, a hotline, and leadership training for young disabled people.⁴¹ Their goals are to give voice to the concerns of disabled people in China, change social attitudes and promote the integration of disabled people into mainstream society. They are committed to establishing and developing local organizations for disabled people and to protecting the rights of people with disabilities throughout China. The Beijing-based non-governmental organization is one of the only disabled people's organizations in China established and run entirely by people with disabilities. It was started in 2006 by two disabled people with IT backgrounds. In 2008, two of the staff became the first fully accredited disabled Chinese journalists in the history of the Olympics.⁴² Above all, they believe it is essential that disabled people have their own, independent voice.

In 2013, One Plus One teamed with the Media Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to issue *Observation Report on China Print Media of Disability Reports from 2008 to 2012*. Studies showed that the themes of 1,468 reports from 2008 to 2012

were mostly focused on disabled people's health or rehabilitation and the help they received from others. The voices of people with disabilities were rarely represented and there were very few reports on education, employment and the participation of disabled people in public life. Most of the news reports failed to introduce disability rights concepts, such as inclusive design or discrimination or reference any of China's disability laws.⁴³

As a result of the research, One Plus One produced the *Reporters' Handbook for Reporting Disability*, which encourages media to look at disability from a human rights perspective and promotes more positive terminology, such as the use of 殘障 (*cán zhàng*), which translates roughly to "disabled and obstructed," rather than the more commonly used 殘疾 (*cán jí*), which translates to "disabled and sick" or "deformed." One Plus One had begun promoting the term *cán zhàng* in 2006 and noted that its use in news media increased from less than one percent to around 10 percent in 2013.⁴⁴

Cai Cong publishes *YouRen*, One Plus One's magazine, written by and for the disabled community.⁴⁵ Cong is trying to change the media image of people with disabilities:

In addition to environmental obstacles, an important aspect is the various misunderstandings and negative attitudes ... On many occasions, disabled people are regarded as useless and in need of compassion. It is these kinds of thoughts that put me through all those experiences and confusion in my early years. Where do these thoughts come from? Do disabled people isolate themselves or are they isolated by the public's

attitude and actions? Whatever the origin, mass media is constantly deepening the old stereotype image of the disabled in public.⁴⁶

Improving the situation for people with disabilities anywhere in the world involves a multi-pronged approach, which includes disabled people being educated about their human and legal rights, forming social movements, advocating for policy change at a governmental level and changing the attitudes of the nondisabled public. In all of these, news and information play a key role.

One Plus One operates a radio station—Voice of the Blind—that broadcasts throughout all of China via China National Radio, reaching as many as 300 million listeners. They are particularly interested in reaching rural areas, where their program is usually the only source of information about disability issues. Mastering the skills of radio production has given members of the production team the confidence to express their views. The programs cover issues such as how to access education and employment, independent living skills, and accessible technology.

To help disabled people in poor, remote rural areas of China obtain essential information, One Plus One operates regular “Mobile Advice Clinics,” staffed by members of One Plus One together with experienced legal, health and personal counselors. Over the course of 15 clinics they have given direct counseling to over a thousand disabled people. This has enabled them to keep in touch with some of the poorest people in the community.

Listeners often call into the station's hotline, seeking additional information. Cai Cong noted that they often want to know if One Plus One knows of a cure for their disability.

We try to re-direct them to look at living with a disability—how they might access services and live independently. We want them to know that they are not the problem—the problem is the physical and attitudinal barriers within society.⁴⁷

One listener of Voices of the Blind lives in the rural area of Sichuan Province. He is totally blind and the radio is the only way for him to get information. When he heard that One Plus One opened a hotline for the blind, he asked his family to buy a cellphone for him so that he could give them a call. Through the hotline, he learned how to get free screen reader software. He went to the local Disabled People's Federation to get computer training and a living allowance.⁴⁸ As Cong explains:

Later he heard on the radio that we were beginning to provide a service to make audio books for the blind. He sent us a book about how to feed pigs, as he felt pig farming could be an employment option for blind people in rural areas. He got the idea that blind people are valuable and should be active by listening to our programs.⁴⁹

The people who staff the hotline all have disabilities and are trained on the center's accessible phone and computer technology. One of the staffers, a young woman who was working there during her summer break from college, said that growing up, her parents were supportive of her becoming independent and choosing her own career path. Ultimately, however, she was only

allowed to attend the Special Education College of Changchun University that trains the blind students solely for massage therapy jobs. When asked if she wants to be a masseuse, she laughed and said, “No! I hate massage.”⁵⁰

The education issue affects the employment rate of people with disabilities, which has been estimated at 73 percent, with men more likely to be employed than women.⁵¹ Aside from directly affecting people’s independence and ability to support themselves, this also has wider implications. As the Human Rights Watch report notes: “China loses as much as US\$111.7 billion, or about three percent of its GDP, as a result of lost productivity stemming from excluding persons with disabilities from the workforce.”⁵²

One Plus One addressed the issue of education and employment, as well as other issues such as women with disabilities and access to information, in its 2012 report, *Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. (China ratified the convention in 2008 but has been slow in implementing its principles. The United States has signed but not ratified the convention.)⁵³

Leadership Camps

To prepare a new generation of activists, One Plus One holds leadership training camps for young disabled people from all over China.⁵⁴ The workshops include disability equality training, information about the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and disability rights in other countries, how to tell a good story, how to make use of social media and how to

influence traditional media. At the end of camp, everyone is assigned to tell a story in three minutes.⁵⁵

One leader at a recent camp, who has cerebral palsy and speaks with some difficulty, described his experience speaking in front of a group for the first time:

During the process, I was very humorous, very witty, everybody was laughing happily. I felt very good. I was forced to do it but this taught me, we need to learn to take one step forward. When you have your first step forward, there is a new and beautiful world.

Before I had very low self-esteem, no self-confidence, dared not to talk especially in front of people. When I was forced to break through, the result was not bad.⁵⁶

An important aspect of the camp is connecting people with different types of disabilities with each other—especially those who are isolated in their communities—to encourage them to support each other and work together to effect change.

Can You Hear Disabled People's Voices?

On a national level, in an effort to move the disability rights movement in China toward more visibility, diversity and inclusiveness, in November 2014, One Plus One launched China Voice of Disability Month. The goal was to give a big picture of disability rights, educate people about resources and attract the attention of the government and public to promote changes in attitudes.⁵⁷ It was the first large-scale joint activity created by the disability community and

provided coverage of a full range of disability issues, taking place in 31 cities in 22 provinces and including 57 partners and 87 events.⁵⁸

The starting point was “Can you hear disabled people’s voices?” and the end point was “Yes, I can hear disabled people’s voices.” The initiative included a public discussion in Guangzhou on disability and sex, one of the few times this topic had been openly discussed. “When disability and sex are put together,” says Cai Cong, “it opens up something that penetrates deep into the heart of the problem faced by disabled people: the acceptance of one’s body and oneself.”⁵⁹

Somalia: Working with the Media

Emerging from two decades of civil war and lawlessness, Somalia’s people are struggling with poverty and continuing violence. Moreover, as in many societies, people with disabilities are the hardest hit. “More than two decades of conflict, inadequate health services and discrimination have left people with disabilities in Somalia at risk of forced marriage, violence, rape and repeated forced evictions,” according to a briefing published by Amnesty International in 2015.⁶⁰ “People with disabilities, particularly women and children, are the most vulnerable and discriminated against people in Somalia,” says Mohamed Ali Farah, director and co-founder of Somali Disability Empowerment Network (SODEN). “For example, less than one percent of disabled children are enrolled in school here.”⁶¹

Mohamed speaks from direct experience. The thirty-one year old contracted polio at the age of three. His family, like many with disabled children in Somalia, did not send him to school. Through his own initiative, he started attending school at the age of 14 but, without a wheelchair, had to crawl through the streets to get there. The temperature in Somalia often reaches 95 degrees Fahrenheit and the ground was scorching. The difficult situation for disabled people in Somalia and Mohamed's own struggle to get an education inspired him to start SODEN in 2011. His disability rights organization, based in Mogadishu, focuses on education for disabled children, as well as other issues: "Last year, I was able to convince five families to send their children to school."⁶²

Media and Disability

Mohamed wants to use media to change negative social attitudes about disability and to reach more families with his message about education. However, getting access to media is difficult, as he notes, "In Somalia, you can't use the mass media unless you bribe them and most disability organizations don't have enough money to bribe the media."⁶³

Outside of disability issues, media in Somalia has its problems. The country was ranked 167 out of 180 countries on the 2017 World Press Freedom Index produced by Reporters without Borders.⁶⁴ According to InternetLiveStats, in 2016 only 1.7 percent of the population or approximately 192,775 Somalians are online (ranked 164th out of 201 countries).⁶⁵ For people with disabilities, getting the information they need and getting their voices heard is compounded by problems of invisibility, representation and access.

Accurate, comprehensive coverage of disability issues can help alleviate stigma and discrimination and increase understanding of the capabilities of disabled people, which can lead to increased employment and educational opportunities and the ability of disabled people to participate in and contribute to society. Increased awareness can also help decrease abuse—disabled women and children and people in institutions are particularly vulnerable.⁶⁶

Disabled people need access to accurate information (on health, education and employment) in accessible formats to become empowered, participate in society, make decisions about their lives and fight for their rights.

Delivering the information people need entails a three-pronged approach:

- Recruiting and training disabled journalists and media professionals, giving them the tools and technical assistance to make media production accessible.
- Training all journalists how to cover disability issues in an accurate, non-stereotypical and non-stigmatizing way.
- Making mass media accessible to people with all types of disabilities.

Working with NGOs

In Somalia, the media development NGO Internews conducted workshops on media literacy with members of civil society organizations, one of which Mohamed attended. Before the workshop, Mohamed did not trust media professionals, nor did he see them as an integral part of his

communication work: “I was suspicious towards journalists and felt they often twisted people’s words, covered stories only when bribed and were not interested in civil society issues.”⁶⁷

Fatuma Abdulahi, a journalist who was Internews Project Director in Somalia, agreed that bribery is still one of the most problematic issues in Somali media. “Journalists have lost credibility in the eyes of civil society organizations, so connecting them constitutes a good first step to win back trust.”⁶⁸ Mohamed is happy that he has been able to obtain skills that can help him break down traditional barriers between journalists and the disability community. He is hopeful that he can help media professionals begin to understand why it is important to cover disability issues more comprehensively and accurately: “I feel more confident about approaching the media now. I came to realize that journalists are not as I imagined.”⁶⁹

Mohamed was immediately able to put his new skills into practice on International Day of Persons with Disabilities, December 3, 2014, when he held a well-attended press conference. In 2016, he received a national award for his efforts advocating for people with disabilities and to make public places in Somalia accessible.⁷⁰

Conclusion

The overarching theme that emerges from these case studies from Afghanistan, China and Somalia is the need for people with disabilities to be intimately involved in the process and decision-making concerning media production, portrayal and access. Because people with disabilities are more likely to live in poverty and face discrimination worldwide,⁷¹ it is

imperative that they be consulted about what they need to produce media, how they want to be portrayed, and what they need to access news and information.

This means that the agencies that are involved in international media development should be including people with disabilities as a regular part of their media programs, proportional to their representation in society (approximately 15 percent worldwide but higher in developing countries⁷²) and not just “special” disability programs. This may require some additional outreach due to the lack of access to education for many people with disabilities.

As a British government official who works in the area of international development said in 2014, “It’s a sad truth that in many developing countries people with disabilities simply don’t count. No data is collected on their disabilities nor their abilities, so it’s as if they just don’t exist.”⁷³ In these developing societies, people with disabilities often have been shoved aside with the reasoning that limited resources should be spent on nondisabled people. However, governments need to recognize how inclusion of disabled people in mainstream society benefits all of society, rather than seeing them as a burden. Funding and developing media programs that focus on training people with disabilities and accurately representing their issues helps this inclusion process. Ensuring that people with disabilities have access to news and information in whatever format that works for them will help them advocate for their needs and make informed decisions about their lives.

Notes

¹ Based on “years of health lost due to disability (YLD) per 100 persons 2004.” World Health Organization, *World Report on Disability* (Geneva: WHO, 2011), 271–280.

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⁵ Wangyun, “Invisible Millions: China’s unnoticed disabled people.”

⁶ Wangyun, “Invisible Millions: China’s unnoticed disabled people.”

⁷ Gerard Goggin, Haiqing Yu, Karen R. Fisher, and Bingqin Li, “Disability, technology innovation and social development in China and Australia,” *Journal of Asian Public Policy* (July, 2018): 2.

⁸ Amnesty International, *Somalia: Prioritise Protection For People With Disabilities*, March 12, 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR5211662015ENGLISH.PDF>

⁹ Brigitte Rohwerder, “Disability in Somalia,” K4D Helpdesk Report, (Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies, January 19, 2018), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a744dbded915d0e8bf188ec/Disability_in_Somalia.pdf

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¹¹ Amina Azimi, interview with Patricia Chadwick with translation by Ajmal Khan, February 2016.

¹² Azimi, interview.

¹³ Government of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan National Disability Action Plan, 2008-2011* ([Kabul]: Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, 2008), 4, http://www.apminebanconvention.org/fileadmin/APMBC/IWP/SC_june08/Speeches-VA/SCVA-StatusImplem-3June08-Afghanistan-ActionPlan-en.pdf

¹⁴ Government of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan National Disability Action Plan*, 4.

¹⁵ Zarghona Salehi, “Sadly, rights on paper only for the disabled,” *Pajhwok Afghan News*, May 25, 2014, <https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2014/05/25/sadly-rights-paper-only-disabled>

¹⁶ Azimi, interview.

¹⁷ Central Statistics Organization (CSO), *Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2016–2017: Highlights Report* (Kabul: CSO, 2018), 2, [http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Surveys/ALCS/Final%20English%20ALCS%20Highlight\(1\).pdf](http://cso.gov.af/Content/files/Surveys/ALCS/Final%20English%20ALCS%20Highlight(1).pdf)

¹⁸ The Asia Foundation, *Afghanistan in 2018: A Survey of the Afghan People* (San Francisco: Asia Foundation, 2018), 154, <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/afghanistan-in-2018-a-survey-of-the-afghan-people/>

¹⁹ Azimi, interview.

²⁰ Azimi, interview.

²¹ Internews Staff, “After Losing His Legs, an Afghan Man Finds Hope from a Unique Radio Program,” May 2011, <https://www.internews.org/updates/after-losing-his-legs-afghan-man-finds-hope-unique-radio-program>

²² Internews Staff, “After Losing His Legs.”

²³ Internews Staff, “After Losing His Legs.”

²⁴ Internews Staff, “After Losing His Legs.”

²⁵ Gentile, “Afghanistan radio program.”

²⁶ Amina Azimi, interview.

²⁷ Amina Azimi, interview.

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