

ANNUAL REPORT 2011

Delivered to the Membership of USICD at their Annual Meeting, April 29, 2011

MESSAGE FROM USICD PRESIDENT MARCA BRISTO

The year 2010 brought a fresh infusion of energy to USICD and its many activities. We anticipate that the future will deliver dramatic changes for people with disabilities around the world—and, during the past year, we have started to receive some early glimpses of this future. The world is changing as we watch, in part because of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and in part because of various initiatives with an ambitiously global scope—the Global Disability Rights Library project as one of them.

Today, 147 countries have signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities—including the United States in 2009. And of these 147 signatories, 99 countries have ratified the treaty. Many of these countries are now modifying their laws to be more consistent with the spirit of the CRPD. Some of these new laws are partly modeled upon pioneering legislation in the United States, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Seeing the powerful effect of our national legislation on the lives of people with disabilities in such distant corners of the globe reminds me of the importance of ensuring that the US government, too, ratifies the CRPD. US ratification of the CRPD could have powerful, positive impact across the world. I am proud to be involved with an organization—USICD—that is working toward this goal.

The CRPD is only the beginning of change. It can only come to life when enlightened citizens around the world seize their rights and push the envelope of reform. And citizens who have easy access to disability rights knowledge have the tools they need to enlighten themselves, to learn new strategies for seizing their rights, to stimulate ideas for how to more effectively pursue reform.

The Global Disability Rights Library project we've been working on will very soon start delivering that knowledge in digital format where it is needed most—to advocates in developing countries who have limited internet access. Using innovative, off-line digital storage technology allows us to send a slice of the internet inside a box to places the web cannot reach. I know there are incredible, hard-working, passionate disability rights leaders and allies in every country, just as there are in the United States. And we at USICD are both proud and also very humbled to be able to deliver some of the knowledge these powerful, visionary leaders can use to transform their societies.

Of course, what makes all of our work on the CRPD and the GDRL possible are USICD's members. USICD brings together a diverse membership of disabled people's organizations, disability advocates and allies in support of the global disability community. The energy, passion, and innovative thinking of USICD members drives our work in all areas. To our USICD members—thank you. For those of you who are not yet part of the USICD family—please consider joining with us in a constituent-led organization focused on building bridges to the world's disability communities.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2010 was a year of growth in the operation of USICD. We sustained and expanded our CRPD education and advocacy, and launched the Global Disability Rights Library. We relocated after years hosted in the office of the National Council on Independent Living. Our first office in downtown Washington is centrally located for visiting colleagues and welcoming visitors. Our staff expanded to five, and in early 2011 grew to six. This includes bringing in our first international fellow through the Atlas Corps Fellowship program, Sherzodbek Sharipov, who comes to the United States for one year from Uzbekistan.

USICD is collaborating with the University of Iowa's WiderNet Project, with the support of a three-year grant from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), to produce and distribute a Global Disability Rights Library (GDRL). An International Advisory Board has been formed to guide this project and we have recruited international disability leaders as advisors and endorsers. Project outreach to key international disability colleagues, including through a series of international teleconferences and Skype discussions, as well as such as the Disability Rights Fund and the International Disability Alliance (IDA), has fostered broad support for the concept, collaborative thinking, and complimentary efforts to advance the capacity of disability civil society in developing countries.

USICD's CRPD education and advocacy campaign has expanded awareness of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities among thousands of people. USICD has been leading the effort to educate U.S. disability and human rights advocates, policymakers, and other government and civil society groups about the CRPD. 2010 included over 20 presentations and teleconferences. Our staff and volunteer speakers bureau are meeting diverse constituencies around the country and teaching about the Convention and other international disability topics.

We comprehensively monitor, and are responsive to, a wide range of activities and opportunities related to the CRPD. We have engaged diverse stakeholders within the domestic and international disability, human rights, and diplomatic communities. USICD has been a prominent voice for the vision and values of the CRPD, advocating for and involved in the public discourse leading to CRPD ratification. In 2010, USICD engaged the pro bono support of Washington government relations firm Mayer Brown to support our bipartisan outreach to Capitol Hill. The firm graciously hosted us for a member reception for the December 3 International Day of People with Disabilities.

Inspired by the 20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, USICD joined the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities in collecting signatures for a letter to the leadership of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This letter calls for ratifying the CRPD in the same bipartisan spirit in which the ADA was first passed 20 years ago.

Our work on the CRPD and other international disability issues has propelled our visibility and generated more invitations to be represented at other important policy dialogues. As the executive director, I was invited to participate in a federal emergency management conference to further disability inclusive policies in this area. I was also a participant in a dialogue with Secretary of State Clinton on advancing civil society and democracy. USICD monitored activities around the Universal Periodic Review of the United States' human rights record; I joined the U.S. delegation to the review in Geneva as a public sector advisor. These events have been opportunities to advocate for CRPD ratification and are evidence of our focused and sustained effort to be recognized as a "go to" organization on international disability issues.

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USICD participated in the Conference of State Parties (COSP) to the CRPD at the United Nations. USICD staff sent day summaries to our members and our broader international disability contacts and received positive response for relaying this information. USICD also participated in a one-day convening by the IDA, which coincided with COSP. We maintained our relationships with Disabled Peoples' International and Rehabilitation International and look forward to global convenings with these networks in 2011.

USICD's continued growth in staff capacity has been reflected in our productivity. From our new office, we have expanded our electronic outreach considerably with social media, more web content, and a monthly newsletter. Our web site has had a total of 32,960 visits in its first 12 months of operation; we had 12,231 unique visitors to this site during this period. Approximately two-thirds of our unique visitors each month are "new" visitors and one-third are return visitors from previous months. We increasingly host visiting foreign delegations and other visitors in our office for knowledge exchange and citizen diplomacy.

USICD expanded its formal network, becoming a member organization of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities, InterAction and, in early 2011, the Leadership Conference for Civil and Human Rights. Our relationships with other domestic human rights organizations were sustained and enriched through dialogue and mutual learning. We partnered with Human Rights Watch to host Oscar Winning screenings of the film "Music by Prudence" and the guest appearances of Prudence Mabhena and film director Roger Ross Williams, creating an opportunity for awareness of disability issues within developing countries.

2010 was a year of big changes and a new level of capacity for fulfilling USICD's vision. I look forward to continued innovation and collaboration with our members, broader community, international friends, and our growing staff in the coming year and beyond. I am always interested to hear from our members, discuss opportunities for collaboration, and together raise the visibility of the global disability community and advance the cause of inclusion, accessibility, international friendship, and disability rights.

Submitted by David Morrissey, April 2011

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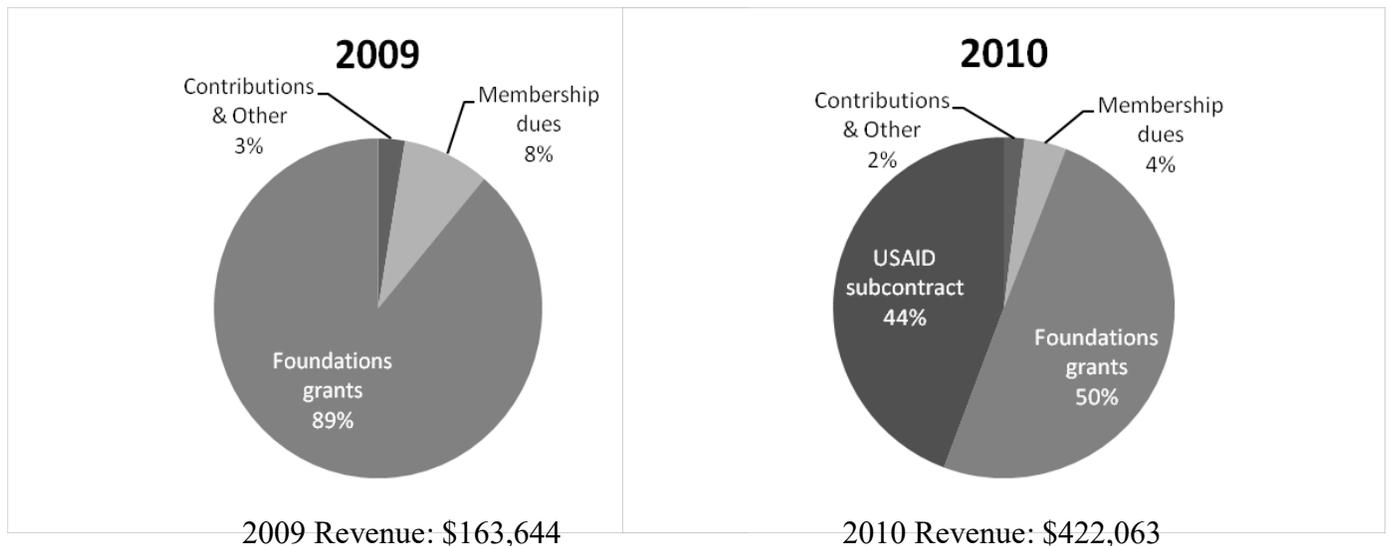
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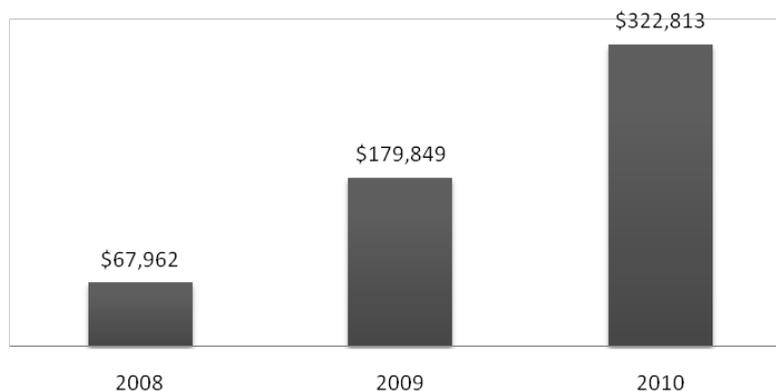
A community of funding and project partners made it possible for USICD to grow to a greater capacity in 2010, expanding our staff and relocating to our own office space. A USAID funded 3-year subcontract with the University of Iowa enabled USICD to create two staff positions devoted to developing the Global Disability Rights Library. Leaving our prior home and secretariat functions provided by the National Council on Independent Living, USICD engaged independent bookkeeping consultant Christine Harris to assist in financial recordkeeping. The USICD Finance Committee developed a comprehensive set of financial management policies.

An independent audit of USICD's 2010 financial statements conducted in April 2011 by AAL Certified Public Accountants found that all financial records were accurate and maintained in conformity with standard accounting principles accepted in the United States. A copy of this audit is available upon request.

Revenue Sources



Annual Expenditures



Finance Committee: Jeff Rosen, Chair and Treasurer; Lee Schulz, David Hutt, and Barbara Leroy. Ex officio: Marca Bistro, Board President.

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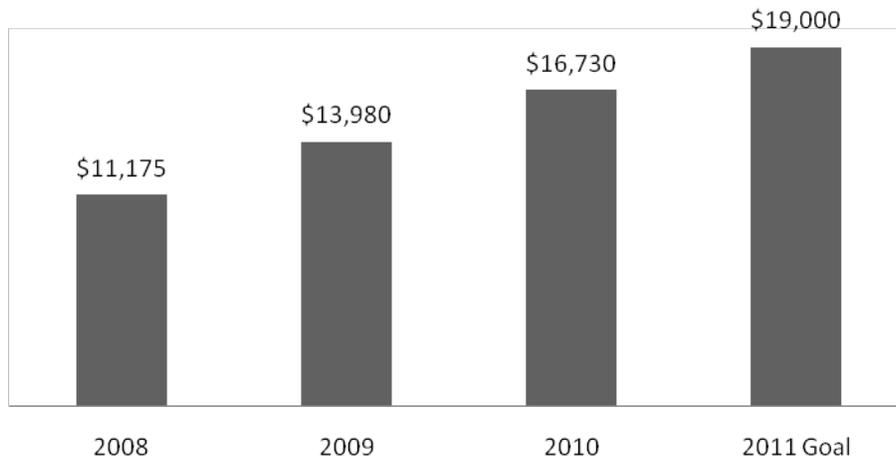
MEMBERSHIP

USICD has seen a steady growth in our membership over the past recent years, due to expansion in both our organizational and individual member categories. At the close of 2010, USICD had 40 Organizational Members and 42 Individual Members.

The Membership Committee continues to reach out to Federal agencies to expand representation in our non-voting Government Membership; in 2010, our Government Members included the National Council on Disability, the Access Board, the Department of Labor Office of Disability Employment Programs, and the Department of Transportation.

Membership Committee: Chair, Joan Durocher; Pat Morrissey, Michael Winter,

Membership Revenue



RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The Resource Development Committee in 2010 worked with the Executive Director to build upon existing sponsorships to support our CRPD advocacy and convening efforts. Our partnership with the University of Iowa WiderNet Project to develop the Global Disability Rights Library has provided additional support. New funding relationships are being fostered, and the committee in 2011 will continue to convene to identify and develop relationships between USICD and potential partners.

Looking forward, USICD is now developing program concepts identified through the strategic planning process being led by the USICD Board of Directors with professional consultation, through the GDRL project implementation with the University of Iowa, and in discussion with government and nongovernmental funders in alignment with USICD's purpose. The Resource Development Committee continues to investigate new potential partners such as corporate sponsors.

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Resource Development Committee: Diana Samarasan, Chair; Randy Rutta, Michael Winter, Lex Frieden, and Pat Morrissey.

GLOBAL DISABILITY RIGHTS LIBRARY

As a three-year project launched at the end of 2009, the GDRL team had a critical task to establish a foundation in 2010 upon which the project could be built. In early 2010, an International Advisory Board (IAB) was assembled to share feedback with the GDRL team. The IAB has 10 members from Guatemala, India, Pakistan, Japan, Ireland, Peru, Brazil, Uganda, South Africa, and Kenya. In addition to representatives from developing and developed countries outside the U.S, the IAB also has nine ex-officio members drawn from the USICD Board of Directors and the faculty of the University of Iowa. With one exception, the ex-officio members are from the United States.

Hundreds of websites, Word files, videos, audio files, and other resources have now been gathered into the GDRL. Some GDRL content is taken from the public domain, such as <http://ada.gov>. In other cases, organizations such as the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR), USICD member Mobility International USA, and others have given permission for us to include their content. The GDRL team will continue to reach out to more authors and publishers, in pursuit of more digital content, for as long as funding for the project holds out. In 2011, the first few copies of the digital library will be delivered to organizations in developing countries beyond the reach of the internet via innovative off-line digital storage technology.

Examples of resources already included in the library include: The full text of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and its accompanying Optional Protocol in multiple languages; human rights training manuals; the full text of disability-related legislation in dozens of countries; information on making buildings, transportation, and information accessible for people with various disabilities; information on providing more people with disabilities with the opportunity to pursue an education or get a job; knowledge on independent living; toolkits on how to design effective projects improving the lives of people with disabilities; and more.

Most content gathered so far has been in English. However, GDRL librarians are continually striving to locate materials in as many other languages as feasible. Some of the languages represented in the GDRL include Spanish, French, Russian, Portuguese, Swahili, and Arabic.

GDRL librarians spent much of 2010 developing a portal that organizes GDRL content into pages and sub-pages by thematic topic. This portal helps to identify individual publications, web pages, collections, and other resources within larger websites valuable enough to be highlighted. Highlighting and cataloguing library content makes it easier for users to more easily locate the resources they need.

In addition to a portal centered on global disability rights resources, GDRL librarians also developed several companion portals that will help lead users to closely related topics. For example, a Basic Disability Information portal will help parents and others new to disability learn the basics. A portal on General Human Rights will introduce users to basic human rights concepts, assist them in finding the full text of a wide range of international human rights instruments besides from the CRPD, and expose them to major human rights institutions such as the OHCHR. A portal on Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and other Disability-Oriented

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Organizations will enable users to find international, national, and local DPOs and other disability organizations around the world.

More companion portals will be developed later in 2011. In particular, librarians are working on a portal on Capacity Building for Non-Government Organizations and a portal on Poverty and International Development.

GDRL staff members have been actively reaching out to the international disability community to raise awareness about the GDRL project and encourage more individuals and organizations to become involved. A series of teleconference calls was held in 2010 as a means for sharing more information about the project and explaining different ways that people can involve themselves, such as sharing suggestions for digital content the GDRL should include or helping raise awareness of the project.

The most far-reaching publicity effort was a formal call for applications in early January 2011 from organizations that want to deploy the GDRL. A total of 60 deployment sites will be identified to receive a free copy of the GDRL in 2011. This call for applications immediately resulted in a significant surge in the number of newly initiated applications. By the first application deadline on March 1, 219 organizations and individual advocates around the world had submitted applications. The first few selected applicants will receive an off-line, digital copy of the library by mid 2011. The GDRL team will continue to accept new applications through September 1, 2011 from organizations competing to be selected by December.

In 2011, the GDRL team will begin exploring ways it can secure the funding support it needs to continue expanding the GDRL project beyond the end of USAID funding in 2012. Staff members have many dreams for making the GDRL more effective at supplying disability rights advocates in developing countries with the digital resources they need to support their efforts.

For example, one of the most common questions people ask about the GDRL is, “But is it available in languages other than English”? This would require hiring more staff fluent in targeted languages to locate and catalogue content and to reach out to, and communicate with, the targeted linguistic community to engage their involvement.

People also commonly ask, “But is it accessible for people with disabilities”? Access to information and knowledge is, of course, the heart of the GDRL project. And the GDRL team has succeeded to some extent in locating content that is accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities. But many organizations in developing countries simply cannot afford JAWS software for people who cannot see the screen to read text, or a head mouse for someone who cannot use a hand mouse. And the GDRL team, at this time, cannot supply them with these tools. This is another potential area in which to seek out funding support.

In addition to these, there are many topics related to disability rights that the GDRL team has only begun to be able to address in the library. Some of these topic areas, such as independent living, inclusive education, poverty reduction, accessibility, and others, could benefit from a more concentrated effort to develop a more comprehensive collection of resources. A more concentrated effort would require more staff support.

The GDRL team hopes to be able to turn to USICD members and external organizations in exploring ideas for productive partnerships, joint initiatives, and strategies for expanding the

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reach of the project, supporting disability rights information dissemination, and building the capacity of disabled people's organizations.

