



**HANDICAP INTERNATIONAL**

**NEWS FOR FRIENDS AND PARTNERS**

CFC # 51472

# THE NEXT STEP

Documentary screens nationwide  
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Bringing smiles and safety to Syrians  
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"My gifts make a difference"  
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www.handicap-international.us

## Mozambique free of mines

### NEWS

Mozambique was officially declared mine-free on Sept. 17, marking a huge victory for the people of Mozambique. Liberated from landmines and other explosive remnants of war, which have caused thousands of casualties, Mozambicans can finally turn the page on this chapter of their history, and enjoy the opportunities for growth that were previously impossible.

A devastating 25-year war of independence (1965-1975), followed by a civil war (1977-1992), left Mozambique among the most mined countries in the world. Thanks to our donors, Handicap International was a key mine actor, demining more than 16 million square meters of land, and neutralizing 6,000 anti-personnel mines and 5,000 explosive remnants of war.

"Now children can play outside, farmers can work their fields, and villages can grow without the fear of setting off a mine," says Gregory Le Blanc, head of Handicap International Mozambique. "However, the country must continue helping victims, because 'mine-free' doesn't mean that the victims of these barbaric weapons have disappeared." They will need rehabilitation and orthopedic follow-up care, social and occupational inclusion, and other assistance for years to come.

## Driving Ebola from Sierra Leone

### NEWS

To help end the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone, Handicap International launched and manages a fleet of 45 ambulances and trucks, which have transported more than 3,500 people suspected of having the disease to treatment centers. Handicap International's teams also decontaminate the homes of suspected Ebola patients and educate community members about the disease in order to prevent others from becoming sick. Because of strict disease-prevention protocol, no staff members have been contaminated. With no new Ebola infections in the country, Sierra Leone is expected to be declared Ebola-free in November.



Khendo, 7, was injured during the earthquake and lost her leg (see page 2). Since then she's worked hard to regain her strength before being fit with a prosthesis. Here with Sudan, her physical therapist, and her friend Nirmala, 8, who also lost a leg in the earthquake.

# Nepal earthquake: Your support still hard at work

### NEWS

Handicap International's teams continue to provide essential support more than six months after the devastating Nepal Earthquake, which killed more than 8,700 people.

Since April 25, within hours of the magnitude 7.8 earthquake, Handicap International's physical therapy teams have been doing incredible work. Thanks to visionary, long-term support from individual donors, and agencies such as USAID, Handicap International has been working in Nepal for 15 years, and had the trained staff on hand to respond. These professionals provided post-traumatic care, and organized 10,500 rehabilitation sessions for more than 4,000 patients.

They also distributed more than 2,300 mobility aids and special equipment such as wheelchairs, crutches, and ergonomic mattresses. Handicap International has since worked in 20 hospitals, medical infrastructures and permanent and mobile rehabilitation camps. Staff organized group and one-to-one psychosocial sessions to help victims overcome trauma. Finally, to ensure no one misses out on its services, Handicap International set up a hotline for people to call for help.

The earthquake destroyed more than 600,000 homes, and damaged another 280,000. To help families who had lost almost everything, Handicap

International distributed more than 4,300 kits packed with essential, non-food items such as tents, cooking supplies, utensils, hygiene products and blankets. Staff also distributed equipment to build corrugated roofs to protect 2,200 families from monsoon rains. When 500 of our beneficiaries were discharged from care, we gave their families a "returning home kit," packed with basic medical supplies, blankets, cooking, and hygiene supplies.

Handicap International works with humanitarian operators to ensure that no one is excluded from aid. This is crucial, because the earthquake exacerbated the

lives of many of Nepal's most vulnerable people, such as people with disabilities, pregnant women, victims of sexual and gender-based violence, older people, and unaccompanied children.

With a view to the long-term, Handicap International is building the capacities of rehabilitation center teams to better meet patient needs. Working with the Ministry of Health, physical therapy services are now included in Nepal's health system, and new rehabilitation units are opening. Thanks to donors like you, the country's health facilities are better prepared for future natural disasters.

thanks to  
**Google.org**

We extend our gratitude to **Google.org** for generously supporting our assistance to earthquake survivors in Nepal with a gift of **\$150,000.**





During the filming of *Right Footed* in Ethiopia, Jessica Cox meets a student at an inclusive school supported by Handicap International and USAID.

## Note from the Executive Director



In this issue, I hope you enjoy meeting Khendo, Ammar, and Dalal, whose stories demonstrate powerfully the difference that Handicap International is making.

As a donor myself, I am always interested to know how the money my family contributes each month is used. I want every penny to go toward helping those most in need of assistance, even while their crises are still in the headlines. But I am also interested in those who are out of the media spotlight, where their daily struggles are known to very few. Handicap International does not forget about the most vulnerable in Nepal, Jordan, Sierra Leone, and Mozambique, long after the glare of the media has dimmed.

At this time of year, our thoughts naturally turn to giving thanks, and I would like to extend mine to you.

I also join the entire Handicap International family in thanking Board of Directors member John Lancaster (see “Donor Reflection”) for his years of service, wisdom, and donations.

Won’t you take a moment today to renew your support, or let a friend know about Handicap International? It means the world to us.

Jeff Meer  
Executive Director  
@Jeff\_HIUS

# Awards for Right Footed

Festivals hail documentary about Jessica Cox

### HONORS

*Right Footed*, the feature-length documentary about Handicap International Goodwill Ambassador Jessica Cox, won Best Documentary at the International Film Festival Manhattan on Oct. 23.

Jessica never allowed herself to believe that she couldn’t accomplish her dreams despite being born without arms. She learned

to type with her toes and drive a car with her feet, and in 2008 became the first armless person to receive a pilot’s license. *Right Footed* chronicles Jessica’s work to overcome adversity, to help children with disabilities, and to advocate for disability rights with Handicap International in Washington, D.C., Ethiopia, and the Philippines.

Directed and produced

by Nick Spark, the film also received Best Documentary honors at the MIRABILE DICTU Film Festival at the Vatican City, Rome, known as the “Catholic Academy Awards,” and at the Offshoot Film Festival. It has three audience awards, and won Best Social Impact Film 2015 at the Hollywood Film Festival. Brad Parks, CEO of the Hollywood Film Festival, called *Right Footed* “...a phenomenal documentary

that will inspire audiences worldwide.”

Handicap International hosted a private screening in October in Washington, D.C.

*Right Footed* is screening at dozens of North American festivals.

To find a local screening, visit [rightfootedmovie.com/filmfestivals/](http://rightfootedmovie.com/filmfestivals/)



# Khendo: Overcoming a devastating loss



### THE BIG PICTURE

#### April 2015

During the Nepal earthquake, Khendo, now 7, was in her house in Sindupalchuck, which collapsed, crushing her left leg and killing her sister and grandmother. When she finally reached the hospital in Kathmandu four days later, it was too late to save her leg. Khendo and her family were in a state of severe shock, but Handicap International promised them that Khendo would walk again.



#### July 2015

After several months of rehabilitation with Handicap International physical therapists, Khendo, and her new friend Nirmala, 8, grew strong enough to balance on one leg and walk with crutches. With a few more months of healing and strengthening, both girls would be prepared to receive prosthetic legs.



#### October 2015

Thanks to you, Khendo is fitted with a brand new prosthesis. Her Handicap International physical therapists will continue to work with her so that she learns how to walk, jump, and run with her prosthetic leg. Prosthetic technicians will make adjustments to her new leg and build replacement prostheses as she grows.



Eight-year-old Ammar tries on his new prosthetic leg for the first time in Jordan.

## Syrian crisis: our commitment

### NEWS FROM THE FIELD

The Syrian crisis has robbed more than 200,000 people of their lives, caused more than 1 million injuries, and forced 4.1 million Syrians abroad. Handicap International's 450 staff in the region have played a critical role in the humanitarian response since 2012, reaching hundreds of thousands of refugees.

Across Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, donors have made it possible for Handicap International to provide, among other services, physical and functional

rehabilitation to 54,223 people, 5,575 prostheses and orthotic braces, and 74,000 mobility aids. We also gave food and essential household items to 141,341 individuals.

"If I had to describe our work in one word, I'd choose the word 'dignity,'" says American Brett Davis, head of Handicap International Jordan.

Inside Syria, the situation is grave. In April, Handicap International mine action experts assessed the beleaguered city of Kobani, Syria, and discovered an alarming level of unexploded ordnance contamination. Four months of combat,

including ground fighting and coalition air strikes, left an average of 10 munitions per square meter in the city center, and destroyed nearly 80% of the buildings.

Handicap International has since cleared one ton of unexploded ordnance from the rubble, and is working in both Syria and Iraq to ensure that people know how to spot, avoid, and report the weapons they find. So far, donors have helped us teach more than 226,000 people how to stay safe amid so many deadly weapons.

## A wheelchair to reach new friends

### A child's journey to independence

#### BENEFICIARY STORY

Seven-year-old Dalal was born in Syria with cerebral palsy, which affects her speech and mobility. "Things got much too dangerous for us in 2012, so we fled," explains Dalal's mother, Hiba. "My husband was already working in Lebanon. I carried Dalal in my arms, and my eldest son had to do all of the talking on the road to get us to Lebanon. The journey was exhausting."

Dalal's family settled in a second-floor apartment in an unfinished apartment building in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley. One of her brothers recently contacted Handicap International to tell local staff that she needed help. In fact, Dalal hadn't left the building for a year and a half.

Thanks to donors like you, Handicap International was able to send a physical therapist and a social assistant, Mohammed and Zeinab. Zeinab explains that after meeting the little girl, the team decided that she would need a wheelchair so she could move around more easily.

When Dalal saw her colorful new wheelchair for the first time, her face



Dalal, 7, tries out her wheelchair for the first time.

lit up with a huge grin. Hiba is just as happy. "Dalal can't walk by herself," Hiba says. "I have to carry her—it hurts my back. She'll be more independent, and she'll finally be able to play with the other children."

After some muscle-strengthening exercises, Mohammed helps Dalal sit in the chair. She tries out her wheelchair in the living room, then the physical therapist shows her how to push it: "I do this exercise because it's a fun way of helping Dalal strengthen her leg muscles. Although the wheelchair will make her

more independent and she can play with her friends, it's still really important to use her muscles by doing exercises, like standing up."

Mohammed and Zeinab show Hiba how to get her daughter's wheelchair over the doorstep and through the entrance. The family and Handicap International's team then take Dalal outside. She is nervous at first, but soon begins exploring her surroundings. "Well done, Dalal!" exclaims her grandmother, and her grand-daughter's face lights up.

## A race against time in Kobani

### MAELLE HELPS PROTECT SYRIANS FROM WEAPONS

Life is slowly returning to the war-torn streets of the northern Syrian city of Kobani. Handicap International has begun a race against time to protect returning residents from the explosive remnants of war (ERW) amid the rubble by teaching them how to recognize and avoid weapons they find, and by training local authorities to remove explosives.

Maelle, whose full name we cannot disclose due to security concerns, coordinates Handicap International's risk education operations around Kobani. "People are really enthusiastic about returning. They want to work their land, clear the roads, and reopen the markets, hospitals, and schools. While that's great to see, this area has one of the highest densities of ERW per square meter in the world.

"We provide risk education and clear the weapons. We must identify ERW, neutralize them, and then organize clear-up operations in a way that avoids setting off devices buried under the rubble."

Handicap International is one of the few NGOs in Kobani. Educators go door to door to inform residents about the risks in their area in order to prevent accidents, and at the border teams teach returning refugees about staying safe amid the weapons they'll find at home in Kobani.

"I was really surprised to meet children who could barely speak but who could already recognize explosive devices from a list of objects," Maelle says. "Everyone has an explosive remnant of war or a booby trap near their home or a relative's home. They have to live with it until it's destroyed or taken away. Our role is to persuade them to take as many precautions as possible."

Local clearance teams are currently being trained and assisted by Handicap International's instructors. "The clearance workers are from Kobani and the surrounding area, which is important for us because the work is going to take a long time," says Maelle. "We know we're going to continue finding ERW for years to come. We need to prepare ourselves for the long haul, and that's going to require a lot of energy and patience."

*Thank you*

Our work providing weapons risk education to children displaced by the crisis in Syria has been generously supported, in part, through a dedicated gift of **\$40,000** from the **Dorothea Haus Ross Foundation**.

# John Lancaster

## DONOR REFLECTION

*John Lancaster, a Vietnam veteran, is a Handicap International board member and a monthly donor. In his 50-year career, he has fought diligently for the rights of people with disabilities in the U.S., and abroad, especially in Vietnam. He served as the Executive Assistant to the Chairman, and then Executive Director of the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities. He retired in 2009 as Executive Director of the National Council on Independent Living. In December 2010, President Obama appointed him to the Board of Directors of the United States Institute of Peace. In this reflection, he explains the path he has charted since he was injured in Vietnam to ensure that people with disabilities have the rights, and services they need to thrive.*

I remember the man who shot me. He stood up, out of the rice paddy, and fired his AK-47. He punctured both of my lungs, and clipped the inside of my spinal column. It was May, 1968, and I was an infantry platoon commander in the Marine Corps. Thirty two of us had been out on four days of patrol and had set a perimeter. We got surrounded by a battalion of North Vietnamese at midnight. I was injured with 17 others. Four men died.

I returned to western New York, where my family and friends welcomed me, but to a country that wasn't ready to receive me as a man who now used a wheelchair. When I applied for law school at Notre Dame, my undergraduate alma mater, I was first told that although I qualified, they could not accept me because the law school was inaccessible and the first year class had already been filled. I argued that I would bring my own chair and make my own accommodations. After graduation, the employment discrimination I experienced as a young attorney was unbelievable, too. The only employer that would hire me was the VA's Board of Veterans Appeals.

I met Handicap International in Hanoi in 2002, working with various Vietnamese Ministries to improve access and services for Vietnamese with disabilities. I had heard about Handicap International in the 1990s, but only in 2002 did I get to meet them in person. I traveled south to offer suggestions on their new spinal cord injury rehabilitation center, built in conjunction



John Lancaster, speaking at Handicap International's 30th Anniversary Reception at the French Embassy in 2012.

with the Vietnamese Ministry of Health, right outside of Ho Chi Minh. They were teaching people how to take care of their bodies, and providing rehabilitation and wheelchairs. It was not unlike U.S. spinal cord injury centers, only this was staffed by Vietnamese. Handicap International taught them how to do the treatments.

***"My conscience demands my involvement and support of my less fortunate disabled colleagues abroad. I do it through Handicap International."***

They were empowering people. I didn't have much to suggest!

In poor nations, in conflict and post-conflict nations, in refugee camps, and in disasters, people with disabilities always get the short end of the stick. We don't even do that well in developed nations. So when I was asked in 2005, to help in establishing Handicap International's brand new U.S. office, I said 'sure!' Since then, I have been on the Handicap International Board.

Handicap International provides a unique service that no other NGO in the world can match. We empower people so they're taking responsibility for their own well-being and lives. Having traveled to many parts of the world, I have seen that other countries don't have what we have in the U.S. in terms of support services and laws to protect the rights of people with disabilities. Handicap International is out there working, in a very effective way, to

bring that to people with disabilities in many countries where such laws still don't exist, or haven't been implemented.

I've seen thousands of Vietnamese with disabilities who lost limbs, or were disabled because of Agent Orange, or with emotional scars that resulted from that long-ago conflict we were involved in. We must do

I know what it is to have a severe disability. I have seen first hand what it is like for people with disabilities in impoverished lands, war ravaged communities, and disaster ruined cities. My conscience demands my involvement and support of my less fortunate disabled colleagues abroad. I do it through Handicap International.

Please join me in supporting Handicap International. Please do it now at [www.handicap-international.us](http://www.handicap-international.us)



Handicap International's website has the most up-to-date news, plus photos and videos of the people your donations help. [www.handicap-international.us](http://www.handicap-international.us)

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