

# Building Bridges

A MANUAL ON INCLUDING PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES  
IN INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

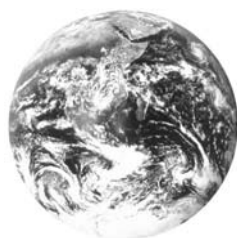


Editors: Susan Sygall and Cindy Lewis

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*"People with disabilities participating in exchanges have additional roles: we build bridges and we break down barriers for others with disabilities."*

-Anatoli Ilyashov



*"A mind that is stretched by a new experience can never go back to its old dimensions."*

-Holmes



*"One day I shall say to myself, this is the way of being you have shaped, and the vastness of the view was worth the climb."*

-Veronica M. Murphy



# INTRODUCTION

We are pleased to introduce the fourth edition of *Building Bridges: A Manual on Including People with Disabilities in International Exchange Programs*. This expanded Manual provides new information, strategies, tools and resources that will assist international exchange program practitioners to include people with disabilities in all types of international exchange programs – from study abroad programs for students to international service programs for people of all ages – and as volunteers, host families and staff members in their organizations.

As editors, we suggest that the reader use this Manual as a comprehensive how-to implementation guide for successful inclusion. We also encourage readers to use the Manual as a tool for training program staff and as a resource for working with overseas partners. The Manual is divided into chapters, beginning with strategies for conducting successful outreach to people with disabilities, continuing with chapters on incorporating adaptations into programs, cross cultural issues, air travel, insurance, budgeting for inclusion and alternative formats, and concluding with an extensive list of resources on these and other topics. The final appendix includes sample application and accommodation forms that can be tailored to meet the needs of a wide range of international exchange programs.

Although the format of this fourth edition closely resembles that of the previous *Building Bridges* Manual, the information and resources in this edition have been revised, updated and expanded throughout to reflect the increasing diversity of international exchange program participants, changing security requirements in international travel, and the impact of technology on adaptations for people with many types of disabilities. For example, since the publication of the last edition, it has become evident that people with non-apparent disabilities, including learning disabilities, psychiatric disabilities and health-related disabilities, are participating in international exchange programs in ever-greater numbers. Hence, in this fourth *Building Bridges* Manual, readers will find expanded information on these and other non-apparent disabilities, and suggested adaptations to facilitate successful international experiences for people with a wide range of disabilities.

In light of heightened security at airports in the United States and around the world, we have also revised and expanded the chapter on air travel to include detailed information about the impact of new security requirements on people with disabilities, and strategies for working successfully with airport personnel.

Finally, technological advances have expanded the options available to people with hearing, visual and communication disabilities. In this edition, we have provided an introduction to some of the new technologies available to international exchange program practitioners and participants, as well as an expanded list of resources related to these topics.



Throughout the Manual, the reader will find personal stories, written by people with disabilities and international exchange program practitioners, highlighting some of the creative strategies that both participants and program administrators have used to facilitate successful international experiences. We encourage readers to share with us your own experiences of inclusion of people with disabilities in international exchange programs, and to offer suggestions as to how we can improve the content or format of future editions of the Manual.

At Mobility International USA, we are excited by the increasing number and diversity of people with disabilities who are participating in all types of international exchange programs. We are also encouraged by the growing commitment of international exchange program practitioners to enriching their programs by including people with disabilities. We challenge our colleagues in international exchange to ensure that life-changing international experiences are equally available to people with and without disabilities. This world needs the contributions of all of its citizens. *Challenge Yourself and Change the World!*®

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