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Welcoming IREX as a TAAP Inclusion Partner
The TAAP Initiative at World Learning is pleased to announce that IREX has joined the TAAP Steering Committee. IREX is an international nonprofit organization dedicated to building a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world by empowering youth, cultivating leaders, strengthening institutions, and extending access to quality education and information.

As global development challenges evolve, IREX recognizes that the amplifier effect of inclusion is increasingly urgent. IREX President and CEO Kristin Lord explains that "extending access to prosperity and justice will improve the lives of millions while contributing to greater security and political stability for us all. It is a moral imperative and a matter of human dignity."

As a member of the TAAP Steering Committee, IREX will share insights and expertise developed over 50 years working with diverse local partners in over 100 countries to further enrich the TAAP approach. IREX has also committed to piloting the TAAP approach with several district libraries that serve as Regional Training Centers under its Novateca program in Moldova, thus seeding TAAP into a network of government institutions with a mandate to provide community services and access to information to all. The IREX team looks forward to continuing the collaborative process of co-creating the TAAP Toolkit on gender equality and social inclusion with World Learning and the impressive group of resource partners it has assembled.

*Photo Courtesy of IREX: The 1,000+ public libraries modernized through IREX’s Global Libraries Moldova Novateca program provide vital community services and equitable access to information, particularly in impoverished rural areas.*
Advancing Autism Inclusion: Data Gaps and Promising Programs

April is World Autism Awareness month, which is an opportunity to highlight autism initiatives including research, diagnoses, treatment, and overall awareness for those with the disorder. Progress in terms of inclusion awareness is being made – just look at examples such as Mary Temple Grandin, an American professor of animal science at Colorado State University, consultant to the livestock industry on animal behavior, and autism spokesperson. She is one of the most vocal individuals on the autism spectrum to publicly share insights from her personal experience of autism. Another example of bringing the experience of people with autism in to mainstream understanding is Sesame Street’s new character, Julia, who gives children with autism and their families someone to identify with — and for those that don’t, a window into their world.

While awareness is one piece of combatting stigma and marginalization, it is also important to have an understanding of the number of people worldwide who have autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and how they experience agency, access and
power. According to the U.S. Center on Disease Control (CDC) almost 1.5% of the world’s population has autism. Unfortunately, the bulk of the data comes from U.S. sources because in many countries, autism is not recognized as a unique disability. The U.S. Autism National Committee (AutCom) urged Congress in 2013 to ratify the CRPD as it would “enable the United States to build awareness of autism overseas, and to ensure that people with autism are integrated in society. Being part of the CRPD process will enable America to help build a vital international framework to protect the human rights of people with autism and other disabilities.” Despite this urging, the CRPD also does not recognize autism as a unique disorder.

One of the benefits of increased awareness has been the emergence of programs that are designed to "tap" in to the voices, skills and lived experiences of people with autism. One example of such an organization is Action for Autism (AFA). AFA is a non-profit organization that is doing great work to increase the inclusion of people with autism across various sectors. The organization based in New Delhi, India works to “facilitate an inclusive and barrier free environment that enables the empowerment of persons with autism and their families; and to act as a catalyst for change that enables persons with autism to live as fully participating members of the community.” In addition to programs such as direct educational and vocational training for individuals with autism, they provide training to outside groups on inclusion and sensitivity to issues surrounding autism. AFA is committed to creating boosters at various levels of society to ensure the inclusion and empowerment of persons with autism at every level of society. According to UN India's Exposure Lab, when a child is diagnosed with autism in India, most families find themselves in a vacuum, says Merry Barua, Founder and Director of Action for Autism (AFA). And she should know. Her son, born 37 years ago was diagnosed with a severe form of autism. Merry urges caution on focusing on 'success'. “How do you measure success? For one person with autism, it could be getting a job in an MNC, while for another it could be just being able to get out of the house,” she says. What is needed is more buy-in to make systemic changes, because acceptance cannot
happen without changes to our environment and within the community."

The private sector has also gotten involved through creating employment initiatives to hire and retain workers with autism. Microsoft’s “Autism at Work” initiative has been one of the highest profile efforts by a major employer, targeting recruitment of adults on the spectrum and retention structures. But Microsoft is not alone, the Autism at Work initiative has been initiated at software giant SAP, and other targeted autism employment initiatives are taking place at several other prominent tech firms such as: Salesforce, Google, Cable Labs, Hewlett Packard and CollabNet.

These civil society and private sector developments are exciting steps towards greater autism inclusion and we look forward to seeing what the future holds for advancing the agency access, agency and power of persons with autism!

*Photo: Courtesy of Action for Autism, National Center for Autism India, 2017.*
Workshop on Integrating Sensitivity to Identity-Based-Violence

On April 20, 2017, World Learning’s TAAP Inclusion Team, in collaboration with new institutional partner IREX, organized a convening of gender-based violence specialists to provide expert guidance on integrating inclusion sensitive approaches to ensure appropriate attention to identity-based violence (IBV) throughout an inclusive program cycle. The specialists contributed to a facilitated discussion that included developing a definition for IBV, an articulation of why IBV matters to sustainable development, and ideas for integrating IBV throughout an inclusive program cycle.
The group developed the following working definition for IBV: “IBV is a violation of human rights, or failure to recognize those human rights, directed against an individual or group because of their identity, perceived or embodied. This violence can undermine physical and mental health, well-being, dignity, security and autonomy and it includes threats of such acts in public or private life. It is perpetrated against individuals or groups because of their perceived or embodied identity such as race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. It is an expression of power imbalances between those who hold power and others, recognizing the changing dynamics and systems of power. The manifestations of IBV prevent targeted individuals and groups from fully participating in and contributing to political, social and economic life.”

During the discussion of why IBV matters, the experts reflected on how important it is to recognize diversity in order to ensure that specific needs related to IBV are met. They also emphasized during the discussion that a project’s results could be undermined if IBV analysis is not included, and that program practitioners shouldn’t ignore the fact that consequences of IBV are costly to the program and to society.

During the last session of the day, the specialists were divided into three groups with an assignment to develop and describe an additional tool or activity for the existing steps for integrating sensitivity to IBV related barriers and boosters to the agency, access and power to marginalized and excluded groups throughout all the phases of the TAAP project cycle: Inclusive Inquiry and Reflection, Inclusion Analysis, Inclusive Design, Inclusive Implementation, Inclusive Monitoring and Evaluation, Inclusive Impact, and Sustainability.

The TAAP Inclusion Team would like to once more thank the participants from CARE, EnCompass LLC, FHI 360, Help Age USA, Leonard Cheshire Disability, International Center for Research of Women (ICRW), U.S. Department of State,
Department of Health and Human Services, Women’s Refugee Commission and World Vision. We plan to continue this valuable discussion with this respected community of experts!

*Photo: Courtesy of World Learning TAAP Inclusion Team, 2017.*

**This Week’s TAAP Staff Pick:**

1 - [Why Narratives Matter for Social Progress](#) by Judith Registre. This article focuses on the narratives that are used to talk about communities where social programs are being implemented. The author asks: "What if, instead of focusing on the negatives, we started to focus on the positives of a people, community, and country? If we were to see communities and groups for their power, we would focus and promote affirming and InPowering stories, projects, and ideas that come from those communities."

2 - [Recommendations for Supporting Women and Girls’ Power, Voice, and Influence Through Digital ICTs](#) by ICT Works. This thoughtful review of Overseas Development Institute’s “Do digital information and communications technologies increase the voice and influence of women and girls?” offers eight key recommendations for designing Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) programs that aim to increase women and girls’ participation and power. We appreciate the discussion of intersectionalities related to gender and class-barriers, the different dimensions of power, recognizing women and girls themselves as agents of change, and attention to violence.

Do you want to share a literature review that pays special attention to gender and
social inclusion? Please share with taap@worldlearning.org.

Photo: Courtesy of “sasint” CC BY-NC 2.0.

Got Inclusion?
We want to hear from you! Please share your inclusion activities, success stories, upcoming events, and intriguing resources. Send to TAAP@worldlearning.org.
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