



Journal Title: ITU News

Journal Issue: (no. 5) 2008

Author: Hamadoun I. Touré

Article Title: Together We Can Do So Much: Empowering People with Disabilities

Page number(s): p. 4

This electronic version (PDF) was scanned by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Library & Archives Service from an original paper document in the ITU Library & Archives collections.

La présente version électronique (PDF) a été numérisée par le Service de la bibliothèque et des archives de l'Union internationale des télécommunications (UIT) à partir d'un document papier original des collections de ce service.

Esta versión electrónica (PDF) ha sido escaneada por el Servicio de Biblioteca y Archivos de la Unión Internacional de Telecomunicaciones (UIT) a partir de un documento impreso original de las colecciones del Servicio de Biblioteca y Archivos de la UIT.

(ITU) للاتصالات الدولي الاتحاد في والمحفوظات المكتبة قسم أجراه الضوئي بالمسح تصوير نتاج (PDF) الإلكترونية النسخة هذه والمحفوظات المكتبة قسم في المتوفرة الوثائق ضمن أصلية ورقية وثيقة من نقلاً.

此电子版（PDF版本）由国际电信联盟（ITU）图书馆和档案室利用存于该处的纸质文件扫描提供。

Настоящий электронный вариант (PDF) был подготовлен в библиотечно-архивной службе Международного союза электросвязи путем сканирования исходного документа в бумажной форме из библиотечно-архивной службы МСЭ.

Together we can do so much

Empowering people with disabilities

Dr Hamadoun I. Touré
ITU Secretary-General



■ The celebration of World Telecommunication and Information Society Day took place this year on 15 May in Cairo, Egypt, at the end of our highly successful ITU TELECOM AFRICA 2008. As a highlight of the ceremony, I was delighted to present this year's ITU World Telecommunication and Information Society Award to three distinguished winners. Under the theme *Connecting Persons with Disabilities: ICT opportunities for all*, this year's laureates were honoured for their work in helping to bring new technologies to disabled communities worldwide (see pages 5–13).

It was a great honour for me to present the Award to Egypt's First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, for her efforts in mainstreaming policies to empower disabled children and young people. She was also recognized for her backing of the Cairo Declaration on Supporting Access to ICT Services for Persons with Disabilities, which was jointly developed by ITU and the World Health Organization in 2007.

Also receiving the Award was Andrea Saks, a life-long pioneer of technologies to help the deaf. Her work with ITU, the United States government and the Internet Governance Forum has paved the way to a more inclusive approach to the development of information and communication technologies (ICT). The third Award went to the DAISY Consortium, a worldwide organization of talking-book libraries and ICT companies which is active in promoting international standards that enable equal access to information for people with reading disabilities.

During the event, I was especially moved by the demonstration of assistive technology by a special guest from Italy, Diamante Albergati. His personal story demonstrates the power of ICT to transform lives. Paralysed from the neck down after an accident, Mr Albergati showed how, using a computer and webcam to track head movements, he has regained his ability to interact with the wider world (see page 14). This is a shining example of the importance of technological solutions in helping people with disabilities — and yet, these solutions are not widely available.

Today, an estimated 650 million people live with disabilities worldwide — of whom three-quarters are in developing countries. Few disabled children in such countries get the chance to attend school, and adults find it hard to earn a living. Although the situation is better in the developed world, a digital divide persists. All too often, people with disabilities find themselves marginalized and unable to afford the technologies that could change their lives.

We must all play our part in ensuring that ICT are made accessible and affordable to people with disabilities, to help them make their valuable contribution to society. In doing so, we should be inspired by the laureates who received this year's ITU Award. We should also remember the words of Helen Keller, a blind and deaf American who became a celebrated advocate for the disabled: "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." ■