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GLADNET: 1999 Annual Report

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GLADNET: 1999 Annual Report

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1999 ANNUAL REPORT

The GLADNET Board of Directors - 1999

Aldred H. Neufeldt
Susanne Bruyère
Michael Kamp
Georges Rovillard
Wingtai Chan
Pierre Olivier
Lucy Wong Hernandez
Edwin de Vos
Ryosuke Matsui Hokuseigakuen
Beverly Beckles
Monroe Berkowitz

The GLADNET Team

Carl Raskin, GLADNET Executive Director, Ottawa, Canada
Lilly Dupuy, InfoBase Manager, International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland
Maggie Limatalnen, International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland

Report of the Board Chair

GLADNET as an organization is very young. In its few years of existence, though, it has already established itself on the world stage as an organization that fills an important niche; namely, as a gateway linking expertise and advice to places where it is needed. Take one little example. A few weeks ago I was invited to address the Caribbean Association on Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities on the occasion of their thirtieth anniversary. Attending the meeting was a GLADNET member from a high-income country who had come to Barbados (the site of the meeting) in response to a request for expert advice circulated through GLADNET's network by the Government of Barbados. This is one of a sizable and growing number of examples of how GLADNET's networking capacity is proving of value around the world.

Consider another example. At the end of June the United Nations is convening a meeting in Geneva to evaluate progress made on directions set at the Social Summit in Copenhagen five years ago. Until two months ago no formal intervention had been planned on a cross-disability basis to address issues of concern to all disabled people around the world. Since GLADNET has as its mission the enhancement of employment opportunity, and since our membership includes not only leading organizations of and for disabled persons but also private and public sector groups, we were in a position to initiate and facilitate development a Round Table at the Geneva 2000 Forum meetings.

Participants at the Round Table will include representation from the major disability organizations, the World Bank, and the private sector.

Both examples, one at a very local level where the lives of disabled people are immediately affected and one at a somewhat ethereal world opinion-shaping level, speak to what has become possible and also to potential. Though we can take pride in what already has been accomplished, it is modest in comparison to our potential for the future. So far we have relied predominantly on the commitment of a relatively small number of people, most of it voluntary. Achieving our Mission will require substantially more by way of both human and financial resources. Towards that end, it has been my judgement that the most critical areas of attention in the near term are those that will build the sustainability of GLADNET in the longer term. In the next few paragraphs is a summary of the steps we have taken to build a more solid foundation

1. Building on our Business Plan

At our 1999 Annual Meeting we adopted a Business Plan with six main goals which may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. Strengthen content available through the InfoBase
2. Promote and support transnational research on key issues pertaining to training and employment
3. Make GLADNET more accessible to a range of audiences around the world
4. Disseminate information on best practices supporting employment
5. Broker and collaborate in development of international development projects
6. Develop and refine GLADNET's infrastructure and economic support base

During the year three concept papers were developed, each of which relates to one or more of our Goals: one on Sustaining Memberships (goal 6); one on building a GLADNET Knowledge Network (goals 1, 3 and 4); and, one on a North- South Strategy (goal 5). Notably absent so far has been attention to identifying the issues that should be concentrated on in research.

Each of these Concept Papers has had the benefit of input and advice of some Board members, as well as from members and friends of GLADNET who had particular knowledge of relevance to a given paper. Nevertheless, each should still be viewed as "draft" and subject to further refinement. During this Annual Meeting consideration will be given two of these which hold particular promise of building a world-wide network intent on eradicating employment inequities as they affect disabled people the Knowledge Network, and the "North-South" Strategy.

2. Changing relationships with the ILO

During this past year the International Labour Organization underwent a significant reorganization. In this reorganization, the Vocational Rehabilitation Branch, which was instrumental to the founding of GLADNET and the InfoBase, disappeared as a separate entity. Needless to say, the Board was alarmed at what the potential implications were for the future of disability within the ILO's overall mission. While the reorganization was taking place we also were advised that financial support for the InfoBase would also be coming to an end.

Both to seek clarification of intent, and to press the importance of disability as a concern within the overall mission of the ILO, we sought and obtained a meeting with it's new Director General, Mr. Juan Somavia. The assistance of one of our members, Mr. Jean Claude Parrot who also is a member of the ILO's Governing Body, was very helpful in arranging the meeting. Attending were Mr. Parrot, our Executive Director and myself. The meetings with both Mr. Somavia, and with new leadership within the ILO, were very positive and promising though one should remain cautious pending future actions. The disability agenda now is subsumed at a lower level of the ILO organization as one of the "target populations" in a Skills and Training section of the Employment Division. We were assured both by Mr. Somavia and by other personnel at the ILO that there has been no loss of resources to disability and that, indeed, every effort would be made to strengthen the working relationship with GLADNET. Mr. Somavia, in particular, stressed that he thought GLADNET important on three counts: (a) disability as an area of concern; (b) our use of technological communications on a world-wide basis; and (c) we represented an example of "civil society" and the ILO working together.

Subsequent to that meeting in February, Mr. Raskin and I have had several conversations with Mr. Gyorgy Sziraczki who has immediate responsibility for the Target Populations section. We are currently exploring three main areas of activity. One is the reformulation of the InfoBase. A second is with respect to developing ways in which GLADNET and the ILO can partner in projects involving technical exchanges with low income countries. A third is with respect to research. None of these have as yet been brought to fruition, though it has been clear in our discussion that there is great potential if the synergy of our respective resources can be brought to bear. For that potential to become a reality, it is clear to me that we will need have the resources so that additional time can be allocated from GLADNET. A part-time Executive Director, and volunteer time from the Chair along with a few others simply will not be enough.

The Annual Meeting and Conference as an Opportunity

This is our third annual meeting as a self-sustaining organization, the previous two having been in Hong Kong and Geneva. In this Washington meeting, as with the previous two, we have not sought to have a large number of participants. Rather, we have sought to pursue an agenda which builds linkages across the different interest groups of relevance to employment and training of disabled people private, public and non- governmental sectors, representatives from disabled peoples' organizations, universities, governments, labour, business, and so on. It would not be surprising if, within a decade, our meetings will be much larger than now. But, at present, I at least am well satisfied that the smallness of our meeting allows for the building of an important network of relationships around the world.

In Washington, as with previous meetings, we have sought to create an agenda which allows participants from various parts of the world to learn something of the issues particularly pertinent to the region hosting the event. In particular, I would like to recognize the contributions of Suzanne Bruyere and Edwin de Vos of our Board, along with Ilene Zeitzer, of the US Social Security Administration, for their leadership in shaping the excellent roster of presenters in our several fora. Thank you all.

As we look to the future, I expect that these annual meetings will more and more become occasions where initiatives of note will be presented for consideration and discussion some undertaken by and through GLADNET, but many others by people and organizations who affiliate with us more loosely. That is as it should be. Our Annual Meeting, as well as our other activities, should assist in building networks of networks towards a common mission.

Concluding Comment

In conclusion, I would like to recognize Carl Raskin, our part-time Executive Director. The two of us have developed a close working relationship involving weekly, often daily, contacts as we seek to exercise leadership in the formation of GLADNET. His continuing enthusiasm for the potential of GLADNET, and studious attention to ensuring that relevant messages are flowing across the Internet, continue to be a central, instrumental reason for the organization's growth.

Looking ahead, I believe we now have a framework to guide us. It is both broad enough to provide flexibility, and specific enough to give focus. With the assistance of our members and friends, it should be possible to gather the resources to establish a dynamic knowledge network that both pursues developing new knowledge through transnational research and synthesize such knowledge in forms that is meaningful both to researchers and users of the

knowledge. It should also be possible to link research to practice in practical ways. As I have the opportunity to speak to opinion leaders in various parts of the world, it becomes ever more clear that high-income countries have much to learn from low-income countries as well as the other way around, that there are opportunities for working with the business sector in creating employment for disabled people which have not been seized, that the GLADNET vision is appropriate in many different ways to many different interests and groups.

I am looking forward to pursuing these and other agendas in the year ahead.

Respectfully submitted,

Aldred H. Neufeldt, Ph.D., Chair

Report of the Executive Director

In each GLADNET Annual Report, one or two words are highlighted to capture the essence our activities This year, I believe the essence of our activities is captured by the word **focus**.

The Oxford Dictionary defines focus as a state of clear definition. In 1999, GLADNET took several steps to clearly define its purpose, and set the stage for its future development. At the Annual General Meeting, held in May at the ILO in Geneva, the GLADNET Business Plan was debated and adopted. Flowing from the Business Plan, the GLADNET leadership has developed two related activities, the **Knowledge Network** and the **North - South Strategy**, which will set the tone for our Association's activities in the years to come.

From its creation, GLADNET has defined itself as a vehicle by which knowledge concerning ways to improve training and employment activities for persons with disabilities may be collected, generated and disseminated. Through the use of Internet technology, and the GLADNET InfoBase, the **Knowledge Network**, when fully operational, will systematize these activities, providing measurable deliverables for our membership, and for the larger research community. As for the **North - South Strategy**, this activity responds to the commitment GLADNET made upon its inception to reach out to bridge the knowledge gap between developing countries and industrialized States.

GLADNET's focus was further refined late in 1999 with the publication of our online **Research Digest**. This document, which will begin systematic publication in during 2000, will provide the GLADNET community with an overview of published research trends in the specialized area of employment and disability. The first issue looked at research in **supported employment** during the period 1997 - August 1999.

GLADNET has been an independent association since 1997, albeit with a special relationship to the ILO. The year 1999 marked the end of the first phase of this relationship. However, following a meeting with both the ILO's Director General and senior management of the disability program in early 2000, we are well on our way to re-defining this relationship to the benefit of both organizations.

I want to thank the Board and the membership for its continuing collaboration. I also want to thank our Chair, Aldred Neufeldt, for his encouragement. Finally, I want to offer a special thanks to Lily Dupuy, our InfoBase Administrator, who has been transferred to a new ILO programme. Lily was tireless in her efforts, and she recognized the potential of the InfoBase. as the way in which information will be shared in the 21st century. On behalf of the Board of Directors and the entire GLADNET community, thank you, Lily for a job well done!

Respectfully submitted,

Carl Raskin, Executive Director

Significant GLADNET Events in 1999

The Annual General Meeting of the GLADNET Association was held in Geneva, hosted by ILO.

The first sectoral conference concerning the gaming / tourism industry was organized. It will be held by Casino Niagara in the spring of 2001.

The Board of Directors of the GLADNET Association met on three occasions in 1999; twice at the occasion of the Annual General Meeting in Geneva (the outgoing and new Board) and once by conference call in November.

The GLADNET Business Plan was adopted at the GLADNET Annual General Meeting in Geneva.

Flowing from the Business Plan, two activities, the **Knowledge Network** and the **North / South Strategy** have been developed.

Pursuant to an agreement with the Executive Director represented GLADNET on the Board meeting of the Disability Information Resources (DINF) Organization, held at the CSUN Conference in Los Angeles.

The Executive Director represented GLADNET and provided Internet training to disabled women at the **Global Strategies to Increase Employment of Women with Disabilities** Conference in San Antonio, Texas.

The prototype issue of the **GLAD*NET Research Bulletin** was published in September 1999.

Through the collaboration of our member, TOUCAN, the Executive Director promoted GLADNET at the **Employment '99 Conference**, held in Brussels.

The 1999 Annual General Meeting at ILO Geneva - Highlights

The following are highlights of the 1999 Annual General Meeting, held at the ILO in Geneva. The complete minutes of the meeting are posted on the GLADNET web site. In addition, they will be distributed at the 2000 Annual General Meeting in Washington.

The third Annual General Assembly Meeting of the Global Applied Disability Research and Information Network on Employment and Training - GLADNET - was held at the International Labour Office, Geneva, Switzerland. A total of 40 participants from GLADNET member organizations in 13 countries were in attendance.

Opening Remarks

In his opening remarks, GLADNET Chair Dr. Aldred H. Neufeldt noted that in holding our meeting at the ILO in Geneva, we were returning to our roots. In his remarks, he invited those in attendance, when considering the work of our Annual General Meeting, to think of GLADNET in terms of a three legged stool, with knowledge generation, knowledge synthesis and knowledge dissemination being the legs. He noted that each leg is necessary, without which our Association cannot stand.

Welcoming Remarks

Susan Parker, A/Chief of the Disability Program, Vocational Rehabilitation Branch, ILO Geneva, welcomed us to the ILO. In her words of welcome, Ms Parker alluded to the relationship between Switzerland and its Cantons in describing how GLADNET's relationship with the ILO is one of mutual support. She also gave an overview of ILO activities, including the forthcoming **Code of Practice on the Management of Disability in the Workplace**. Finally, she also indicated that the ILO and the Vocational Rehabilitation Branch is in a period of transition, following the appointment of the new Director General. A short question and answer session followed Ms Parker's address.

GLADNET Business

The business part of the meeting dealt with the draft Business and Financial Plans. Both Plans were accepted by the membership. In addition, three "breakout sessions" were held, with between 8 to 10 participants each. The purpose of these sessions were to explore ways how the goals and objectives set out in the plans (relating to the InfoBase, GLADNET & International NGOs and Sector Conferences) could support the aforementioned three legs of GLADNET's activities.

A highlight of the business part of the meeting was the election of 5 members of the GLADNET Board of Directors. Each year the terms of one half of the Board of Directors expires. The following persons have been elected to serve a two year term:

Beverley Beckles, National Centre for Persons with Disabilities, Trinidad and Tobago

Susanne Bruyère, Cornell University, USA

Edwin de Vos, TNO, The Netherlands

Wingtai Chan, City University, Hong Kong

Aldred Neufeldt, University of Calgary, Canada

Presentations

At the meeting, the following members presented updates of their research / program activities.

Tele- activities and Telework - CRPF Nanteau sur Lunain, France.

Pierre Olivier & Jacques Alastuey

Impact of Anti- Discrimination Legislation in USA & UK - Cornell University

Susanne Bruyère

Strategies to Increase Employment Opportunities for Women with Disabilities - US Social Security Administration.

Ilene Zeitzer

Cost Benefit Study of Supported Employment in Canada - University of Calgary.

Aldred Neufeldt

Forestalling Disincentives - Rutgers University.

Monroe Berkowitz

International Organization for the Provision of Work for Handicapped Persons (IPWH).

Mark Daymond

Inclusion International

Brendan Sutton.

World Association of Supported Employment.

Michael Kamp.

Réponses Initiatives Femmes Handicapées.

Marie Florence Battini

ISSA Cross- National Study on Work Incapacity and Reintegration.

Rolland Sigg.

GLADNET Membership

GLADNET has gone through a transition. In addition to our paid members, we also have an increasing number of organizations that have affiliated with our Association, who routinely use our e-mail and other facilities to solve problems and obtain information.

At our centre, GLADNET registered at the end of 1999 eighty-five paid members from twenty-two countries, a twenty percent increase over the 1998 membership. This represents a select group that have committed themselves to creating and working for the vitality of a new kind of virtual organization.

In mid- 1998, GLADNET instituted a sustaining membership. A sustaining member is \$20,000 for five years or \$5,000 annually. This program, which targets large organizations which make extensive use of our Internet resources, is designed for those who wish to demonstrate special support for our Association for both themselves, as well for others. In particular, these large organizations see the value in building "a network of networks." By year end, negotiations were underway with a major European institution to become our third sustaining member.

Apart from the above core constituents, GLADNET's Internet resources are increasingly being sought out by organizations that seek out our help on an occasional basis, or who use our services, but who are not otherwise ready or able to make financial commitments. These include the almost 600 individuals and organizations that subscribe to our e-mail service from around the world; the not for profit organizations in developing countries that have sought advice from the membership on various topics; disabled individuals who have sought information and advice concerning employment and training; student researchers who have used our InfoBase, as well as the many organizations and individuals who have created links to our web site from their own. Not only do these "affiliates" provide important links in the GLADNET chain, but they have also been the source of many new fully paid members, who first wished to "try us out." In 1999, the subscription list grew by one-third when compared to the previous year.

Where Do We Come From?

GLADNET is still primarily based in Europe and North America. However, our Association has as goal the extension of our membership base to increased numbers of developing and transition countries. We have added Africa to our membership in 1999, with our new member in Ethiopia. In this regard, we are confident that our **North - South Strategy** will provide the impetus for further expansion in these regions.