IRENE MBARI-KIRIKA, OGW, GMAP

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EXECUTIVE BIOGRAPHY

Irene Mbari-Kirika is a visionary and dynamic global strategic leader whose passion is using technology to transform lives. Her experience as Founder and Executive Director of inABLE unites her entrepreneurial skills with her ability to create and sustain relationships across global boundaries. With inABLE, Irene advocates for an inclusive work culture and education in empowering people with disabilities (PWDs) in Africa. Most recently, inABLE successfully hosted the first Inclusive Africa Conference to promote digital inclusion in Africa.

As **Principal** of the startup Technoprise, Irene has leveraged her experience in bringing assistive technology labs to the blind. This has endowed Technoprise with a much broader scope – gaining impetus & inspiration from the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal #10 "Reduce Inequalities" -- to address *more* of the challenges PWDs face in Africa and other developing countries. Technoprise educates and assists businesses to include PWDs in the digital age -- for their enterprises, their employees, and their consumers. Irene believes that the wide digital divide experienced by PWDs can be bridged through effective accessibility strategies and research. By educating companies to increase accessibility, Irene aims to remove barriers to vital resources for PWDs, resources such as healthcare, education and financial services. She has chosen and trained the Technoprise team to work collaboratively with clients to guide them through every step to impart a greater understanding of how inclusion will benefit their businesses while systematically reducing inequalities for PWDs.

Irene's Fundamental Capabilities & Achievements with Technoprise:

- Understands the opportunities inherent in web accessibility laws: all Internet users **must** have equal access to information and functionality on the web.
- Advocates for the African disability community and developing products that work for PWDs.
- Pilot a testing program for African banks' web and mobile applications to promote inclusive technology.
- Enlist global companies to perform critical usability research in Africa *for* and *with* PWDs.
- Formulate core scenarios to execute innovative assistive technology testing by PWDs.
- Mobilize focus groups participants of PWDs (200—2000), helping businesses understand how users in various markets with varying abilities use their products.
- Facilitating product research and customer preference and needs analyses.

As **Founder and Executive Director of inABLE** in Kenya, Irene recruited a board of directors, a sizable team and volunteers to energize her vision of introducing employable skills training for the blind. Her negotiating prowess and skill in managing global governmental, political, corporate and community relationships sustain the inABLE strategy. As its Executive Director out of Washington D.C., she continues to lead inABLE to a position of leadership in inclusive education, accessible technology training, and assistive technology research.

- Designed and established the inABLE Computer Labs for the Blind program in schools for the blind in Kenya.
- Provided digital skills training to over 9,000 blind and low vision students and teachers.
- Initiated research on homeschooling for children with disabilities during the Covid-19.
- Led research to collect data on people with disabilities in education and financial services.
- Spearheaded the development of digital accessibility standards in Kenya, an ongoing partnership with the government of Kenya.

- Designed and championed the Inclusive Africa Conference to promote digital inclusion in Africa. This created a platform for policy makers and subject matter experts to share and address issues of digital inclusion.
- Launched the Inclusive Design in Africa webinar series to promote discussions and engage various African speakers, creating a platform for people across the region to share experiences.
- Directed the accessibility testing and reporting for the M-Pesa money transfer system pioneered by Safaricom – The mobile money application was not accessible to people who are blind. After our reporting, Safaricom was able to fix the bugs and today people who are blind can independently access their accounts.
- Brought on board various partnerships to support implementation of the inABLE programs as well as collaborate on research activities i.e., inABLE's partnership with the Georgia Institute of Technology.
- Created fundraising activities and wrote various proposals soliciting program funds – recruiting donors and sponsors to support inABLE program activities.

Educational History:

Certified Professional in Accessibility Core Competencies (CPACC)
The International Association of Accessibility Professionals

Global Master of Arts Program (GMAP), International Relations
The Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy, Tufts University, Massachusetts

BA, Business Management
The Coles College of Business, Kennesaw State University, Georgia

Honors Conferred:

• Order of the Golden Warrior – distinguished service to the country, awarded by the President of Kenya, 2016.
• Humanitarian Award, Kenyan Diaspora Advisory Council of Georgia, 2013.

Select Speaking Engagements (focusing on digital accessibility and inclusion)

- Access Israel Global International Conference, Jan 2021
- Kenya Bankers Association, Dec 2020
- GIZ (German Development Agency), Nov 2020
- Helen Hamleyn Center for Design, Nov 2020
- UNICEF, Nov 2020
- Inclusive Africa Conference, 2020
- Inclusive Design in Africa Webinar, March 2020
- Access Israel Conference, 2019
- World Bank, 2017, 2018
- The Africa-America Institute, 2017
- UNESCO Mobile Learning Week, 2016
- ICT Connected Summit Kenya, 2016

Publications:

Co-authored: A Comprehensive Report on the Nationwide Baseline Survey of Technology Skills for Learners with Vision Impairment in Kenya

Contributor: <u>Accessible Computing Education in Colleges and Universities</u>
Co-Authored: <u>Distanced and Disadvantaged: A Study on the Effects of COVID-19 on Education for Learners with Disabilities in Kenya</u>
Co-authored: <u>A Computer Training Program for the Schools for the Blind in Kenya</u>