

Professional Fellows Program on Inclusive Disability Employment (PFP-IDE): 2018

Fall 2018 PFP-IDE alumna **Gwaliwa Mashaka** is the founder of [Employable Africa](#), a social enterprise that connects students and graduates with disabilities to employment opportunities and independent living resources and also advises universities and employers in Tanzania on how to improve their capacity to accommodate individuals with disabilities. Employable Africa also coordinates inclusive career events and provides trainings on emerging technology (through coding school and artificial intelligence resources) to youth who are not enrolled in school.

Gwaliwa is also the Director General of [Women in Energy Africa](#), which promotes gender diversity and disability inclusion in the African energy sector and helps young female leaders, including women with disabilities, access employment opportunities, internships, professional trainings, and financial resources that they can use to build their business profile. A computer scientist and engineer by training, she is based in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.



Prior to her Fellowship, Gwaliwa was a Research Coordinator for VSO International, supporting all the organization's programs on inclusive livelihoods, education and health in Tanzania. She was also hired by the Embassy of Switzerland in Tanzania to act as a technology consultant on a Swiss-financed project focused on women's economic empowerment. In 2016, she was chosen for the [Mandela Washington Fellowship Program](#), the flagship exchange program of the U.S. Department of State [Young African Leaders Initiative \(YALI\)](#), which enabled her to study Business and Entrepreneurship at the University of Nevada-Reno.



Gwaliwa spent her PFP-IDE Fellowship at the [Nisonger Center at The Ohio State University](#) under the supervision of **Dr. Margo Izzo**, Program Director for Special Education and Transition Services.

Through the Fellowship, Gwaliwa sought to obtain expertise and access resources that she could apply to her work on inclusive employment in Tanzania. She was particularly eager to learn best practices for helping youth with disabilities transition into adulthood, employment and independent living, and planned to share her new knowledge via Employable Africa's online

Fig. 1: U.S. Outbound Fellow Dr. Margo Izzo and Gwaliwa at the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania with U.S. Cultural Affairs Officer Jeffrey Ladenson and local partners Hatibu Rajabu and Sophia Beyela. CEO of Peace Life for Persons with Disabilities. (PLFPD).



The [Professional Fellows Program on Inclusive Disability Employment \(PFP-IDE\)](#) is sponsored by the [U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs \(ECA\)](#) and implemented by the [Association of University Centers on Disabilities \(AUUCD\)](#) in partnership with the [Institute for Community Inclusion \(ICI\)](#) at the University of Massachusetts Boston and [Humanity & Inclusion](#).

platforms. During her placement in Ohio, she learned best practices from [EnvisionIT](#), an online college and career readiness curriculum that her U.S. mentors created to help U.S. high school students with disabilities understand their learning styles, discover potential career matches and internship opportunities, and develop personalized strategies and goals for transitioning to higher education and employment. As an expert on how emerging technologies can empower individuals with disabilities, EnvisionIT's design and potential as an online learning resource resonated with Gwaliwa strongly, and she decided to adapt her hosts' model for Tanzania and Africa more broadly.

For her follow-on project, Gwaliwa developed EnvisionIT Africa, a virtual curriculum designed to increase self-determination and employment skills for students with disabilities who are supported by Employable Africa. Gwaliwa's project not only incorporated evidence-based practices from the original U.S. model but also included strategies for engaging key stakeholders, including local businesses, NGOs and other social enterprises who she could partner with to create internship opportunities for students with disabilities.

Gwaliwa and her U.S. mentor Dr. Izzo received an outbound award from the PFP-IDE Program that enabled Dr. Izzo to travel to Tanzania in March 2019. During the visit, they engaged with a diverse group of actors, including students with disabilities, employers, self-advocates, social workers, NGOs, and prospective international partners. Notably, Gwaliwa and Dr. Izzo conducted trainings on self-determination and building employment skills in front of students with disabilities, teachers and invited employers at Jangwani Secondary School for Girls and Yambo Adult Vocational School for Students with Disabilities in Dar es Salaam. They also visited the city's College of Social Work to educate current and future Tanzanian social workers about the impact of internships for persons with disabilities. Dr. Izzo provided Tanzanian practitioners access to online inclusive employment resources from organizations that are well known in the United States, such as Employment First and The Able Trust.

Gwaliwa also engaged local private sector employers and international agencies to explore options to create internship opportunities. She and Dr. Izzo met educated Eric Shigongo, CEO of Tanzanian media company Global Publishers, about the benefits of inclusive internship programs and visited UNICEF's country office in Tanzania, for whom they later produced a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that could be used to bypass internal regulations and facilitate a future internship program at UNICEF for college students with disabilities.

The U.S. Embassy in Tanzania hosted a meeting with Gwaliwa and Dr. Izzo, who spoke about Employable Africa's work



Fig. 2: Gwaliwa and Dr. Izzo discuss how internships can lead to employment with secondary students with disabilities at Jangwani Girls Secondary School in Dar es Salaam on March 9, 2019.



The [Professional Fellows Program on Inclusive Disability Employment \(PFP-IDE\)](#) is sponsored by the [U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs \(ECA\)](#) and implemented by the [Association of University Centers on Disabilities \(AUCD\)](#) in partnership with the [Institute for Community Inclusion \(ICI\)](#) at the University of Massachusetts Boston and [Humanity & Inclusion](#).

and the transformative potential of Gwaliwa's project. Officials agreed to let Employable Africa use the Embassy-owned American Space at the Dar es Salaam library for future events, including Envision IT trainings and inclusive career fairs.



Fig 3: Gwaliwa with social entrepreneurs from across Africa at a Swiss Africa Business Innovation Initiative startup training held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 25-27, 2019.

Gwaliwa has built upon her success through the Fellowship by pursuing new international partners and has received high-profile support for her work on disability inclusion. In March – April 2019 she took part in the [Power Africa Fellowship](#), a USAID-sponsored initiative that brings emerging female innovators in the African energy sector to Johannesburg to share their ideas for sustainable growth in Africa. Gwaliwa connected with leaders from across the continent and presented on gender and how women with disabilities are critical to sustainable energy and equitable growth. She also received a project award from the [Swiss Africa Business and Innovation Initiative](#) that has allowed her to access new business resources and global professional networks. She is an active PFP-IDE

alumna and has served on interview committees for new Fellows, in addition to facilitating cross-cohort alumni collaborations, including an upcoming partnership with a Fall 2019 PFP-IDE Fellow, Bijal Lal, a teacher also mentored by Dr. Izzo who will work with Gwaliwa on implementing EnvisionIT further.

Gwaliwa also won a [Google Europe Scholarship for Students with Disabilities](#), which sponsors promising innovative tech initiatives by computer scientists with disabilities at universities in Europe. She was one of only ten Google Scholars with disabilities and the only African selected in 2019. She will use the award to study at the University of Coventry in the United Kingdom beginning in September 2020, where she will design a new initiative that will apply emerging artificial intelligence resources to assistive technology that can be marketed to persons with disabilities in East Africa.

Impact Highlights

- Adapted U.S. college and career readiness program EnvisionIT to support students with disabilities in Tanzania
- Trained 121 Tanzanian students with disabilities (81 secondary students and 40 adult vocational students) on self-determination and how to prepare for transition to employment through internships.
- Provided U.S. strategies and resources for mentoring students with disabilities during transition period to disability advocates, educators and other key stakeholders in Tanzania.
- Educated Tanzanian entrepreneurs, social workers, and teachers about internships and transition to employment.
- Created MOU that lays groundwork for UNICEF Tanzania to develop an inclusive employment internship program.
- Presented outbound activities to U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section (PAS Dar es Salaam), discussed future funding opportunities and formed agreement to use Embassy-owned public space to administer EnvisionIT initiative adapted
- Accolades: Google Scholarship for Persons with Disabilities; Swiss Africa Business and Innovation Initiative; USAID Power Africa Fellowship



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
NISONGER CENTER

The [Professional Fellows Program on Inclusive Disability Employment \(PFP-IDE\)](#) is sponsored by the [U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs \(ECA\)](#) and implemented by the [Association of University Centers on Disabilities \(AUCD\)](#) in partnership with the [Institute for Community Inclusion \(ICI\)](#) at the University of Massachusetts Boston and [Humanity & Inclusion](#).