



Professional Fellows Alumni Webinar **Panelists** Creating Sustainable U.S. – East Africa Partnerships for Disability Inclusion

Martin Blair, Ph.D.

[University of Montana Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities](#)

Missoula, Montana, U.S.A.

Partnership: U.S. – Kenya  



Dr. Martin Blair is **Executive Director** of the University of Montana [Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities](#), a U.S. government-designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (also known as the [Montana UCEDD](#)).

Dr. Blair, who began his career as a special education teacher, is a renowned expert in many disciplines related to **inclusive education**, **employment**, and **disability policy advocacy**. He is particularly well-respected for his pioneering work on disability education, research, and service provision in rural areas, and designing disability programs models that work well in isolated communities.

In 2017, Dr. Blair became directly involved in exchanging expertise between his university center and disability leaders in Kenya after hosting a Professional Fellow, **Elizabeth Shiakamiri**, Programme Manager for [Innovation to Inclusion \(i2i\)](#) at [Leonard Cheshire](#). Together, they developed a project to support early intervention systems improvement in Kenya that led to engagement with Kenyatta University and Maseno University. Dr. Blair and Elizabeth also enabled a collaboration on early intervention between the University of Montana and Sense International-East Africa. He and Ms. Shiakamiri will share lessons from their work and reflections on the current challenges and immense value of international partnerships.





Elizabeth Shiakamiri

Leonard Cheshire – Innovation to Inclusion (i2i) Project

Nairobi, Kenya

Partnership: U.S. – Kenya  



Elizabeth Shiakamiri is the Kenya Programme Manager for the [Innovation to Inclusion Project \(i2i\)](#), a prominent initiative at [Leonard Cheshire](#) that uses technological innovations to directly improve access to paid private sector work for people with disabilities. Ms. Shiakamiri manages i2i activities in Kenya, which have expanded access to employment for thousands of individuals with disabilities and supported their families and communities.

Ms. Shiakamiri is an esteemed expert on many subjects related to disability inclusion, including early intervention, inclusive employment, community engagement, family supports, and structural barriers that prevent people with disabilities' entry into the workforce. She has a strong record of building mutually partnerships between the public and private sector, NGOs, disabled persons' organizations (DPOs), and universities in the U.S. and Africa. She was mentored by Dr. Blair at the [University of Montana](#) for a five-week training on inclusive education via AUCD's Professional Fellows Program in 2017, and has exchanged and adapted many best practices for inclusive education and employment in Kenya since. She has also connected with other Professional Fellows and disability leaders throughout East Africa to create opportunities for research and collaboration that benefit individuals with disabilities at the community level, as well as the professionals who support them in different fields.

Ms. Shiakamiri also has a prominent voice among Kenyan government officials, having served on the National Technical Review Committee, which is tasked with studying and implementing Kenya's Special Needs Education Policy. She has also worked for Kenya's National Council for Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, and Humanity & Inclusion.

Ms. Shiakamiri will speak initially with Dr. Blair about lessons from her collaborations and draw upon her experience in the public, nonprofit and higher education sectors to share her perspectives on sustaining and expanding international ties for disability inclusion.



Margo Izzo, Ph.D.
[The Ohio State University Nisonger Center](#)
 Columbus, Ohio, U.S.A.

Partnership: U.S. – Tanzania  



Dr. Margo Izzo is the Program Director for Special Education and Transition Services at the [Ohio State University Nisonger Center](#), a U.S. government-designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (also known as a UCEDD).

Dr. Izzo has tremendous experience in pioneering innovations in **inclusive higher education** and **transition to employment** for persons with disabilities. She has developed landmark educational curricula that help students with disabilities plan their academic and professional futures, and created a renowned inclusive higher education program at Ohio State University which enables students with intellectual disabilities to enroll in inclusive university classes and take part in all aspects of student life, with support and consistent planning provided to help them secure competitive employment and personal independence.

Dr. Izzo is also an expert in delivering **remote trainings and consultations on inclusive needs** to disability professionals, including teachers and health workers, as well as family members of youth with disabilities. She has created multiple projects that enable disability professionals in far-off areas to access new resources related to youth transition and exchange knowledge.

Dr. Izzo has mentored multiple Professional Fellows from Tanzania and directly supported the implementation of inclusive employment projects that involve entrepreneurs with disabilities, schools, and other important players in promoting disability inclusion. Most recently, she has collaborated with Professional Fellows alumna **Bijal Lal** on a **virtual training initiative** that **connects teachers in Tanzania** with **disability specialists** and **university trainees** in the **United States**. Together, they will discuss a way to create low-cost virtual training partnerships that offer **learning and professional skills** to disability leaders in **both the United States and Africa**.





Bijal Lal

Founder – Tujumuishe Tanzania | Educator
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Partnership: U.S. – Tanzania  



Bijal Lal is a Special Educator and Transition Expert, and the founder of [Tujumuishe Tanzania](#), an initiative that promotes understanding and professional expertise in **inclusive education** and **employment**. Ms. Lal is a leader in her country’s movement to deliver **independent living** and **transition skills** to individuals with disabilities, and is helping Tanzanian schools build their capacity to help youth with disabilities secure **independent living** and employment. She is also an expert on **adapting best practices** for disability inclusion from the U.S. to fit local and regional needs in East Africa, and is skilled at **building partnerships** between U.S. disability experts and professionals in Tanzania.

Ms. Lal was mentored by Dr. Izzo at the [Ohio State University Nisonger Center](#) for a five-week training on inclusive employment via AUCD’s Professional Fellows Program in 2019. Since then, they have built a sustainable partnership to exchange inclusive employment knowledge and between teachers, trainees, university experts, and other disability professionals in the U.S. and Tanzania, and have also **adapted and translated many toolkits** that make it easier for Tanzanian educators and families to support and guide youth with disabilities. Ms. Lal has built a [unique low-cost online program](#) that lets her colleagues and partners in Tanzania engage directly with specialists at Ohio State University, who can share resources and learn directly from the experiences of educators and the disability community. Ms. Lal and Dr. Izzo will talk about how they have created a partnership with **learning opportunities for both Americans and Tanzanian disability professionals** and how it overcomes COVID-19 challenges.





Macdonald Metzger, M.S., DPA

[University of Minnesota Institute on Community Integration](#)

Minneapolis, Minnesota, U.S.A.

Partnership: U.S. – Kenya  



Dr. Macdonald Metzger is the Director of Outreach, Education, and Interdisciplinary Training at the University of Minnesota [Institute on Community Integration \(ICI\)](#), a U.S. government-designated University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (also known as the [Minnesota UCEDD](#)).

Dr. Metzger is an expert on developing and implementing **professional education and training programs for disability stakeholders around the world**. He is also skilled at **community outreach** and engaging leaders in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors in the Global South, especially Africa. In addition to his U.S.-based work, he has directly led and/or advised disability inclusion projects in several African countries, including Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, and Liberia.

Dr. Metzger is especially experienced at helping disability rights advocates, DPOs, and academic institutions in Africa **build capacity** and **develop professional networks** so they can promote inclusion and engage stakeholders from the government, universities, and private sector more effectively. Beginning in 2019, he advised and helped facilitate the creation of one of the first university centers on disabilities in Africa, the Daystar Institute on Disabilities in Nairobi with Professional Fellow Daniel Chege.

Dr. Metzger is also the founder of the [African Association of Disability and Self-Advocacy Organizations](#), an African network of individuals with disabilities and organizations/institutions that support their needs and promote empowerment. He will share his knowledge about building capacity, exchanging and adapting resources for disability inclusion, and how African and U.S. disability leaders can pursue meaningful, mutually beneficial collaborations by joining larger networks.