Impact of AUCD's ADA International Fellowship Program

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Overview

In 2017, AUCD and the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) at UMass Boston's School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, along with AUCD's national network of university centers implemented the ADA International Fellowship Program. The program created opportunities for mid-level professionals from around the globe to spend time in the U.S., learning about the disability experience, inclusive education, and workplace culture. Fellows translated what they learned to their local contexts with the goal of improving the quality of life and building equal opportunities for children and adults with disabilities in their home countries.

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, this program supported professionals from Brazil, Kenya, Peru, and Tanzania to participate in a five-week intensive fellowship at a disability organization in the U.S. The program focused on inclusive education and sought to strengthen education access for people with disabilities globally, in alignment with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which was created to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights by persons with disabilities.

The ADA International Fellowship Program specifically honored the long-term work of Senator Robert Dole and Senator Thomas Harkin dedicated to implementing the Americans with Disabilities Act and supporting and empowering individuals with disabilities of all ages. Senators Dole and Harkin were important bipartisan champions for disability rights over several decades in the United States Senate, and both played a key role in the passage of the ADA.

Spring 2017 Cohort – Group Photo

Back Row (L to R): Sileno Santos, Goodluck Chanyika, Dawn Rudolph, and Martin Kavua.
Front Row (L to R): Siddarth Nagaraj, Monica Mbelle, Elizabeth Shiakamiri, Raphael Mbiiji, Faith Muange, Jackline Bartenge, Maria Omare, and Miwa Tanabe.
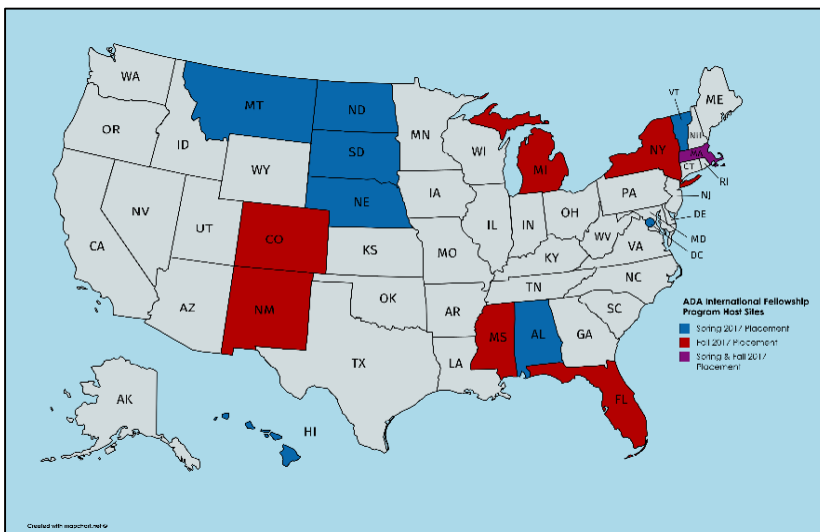
Fall 2017 Cohort – Group Photo

Back Row (L to R): Leyla Liana, Linnea Allison, Isack Idama, Charles Kellett, Dawn Rudolph, Sarah DeMaio, Japhary Shehaghilo, Miwa Tanabe, and Siddarth Nagaraj.
Front Row (L to R): Ann Cody, Jackline Lidubwi, Susan Masila, Cristina Higa, Fiorella Guerrero Calle, Nuala Ribeiro, and Amina Shaaban.
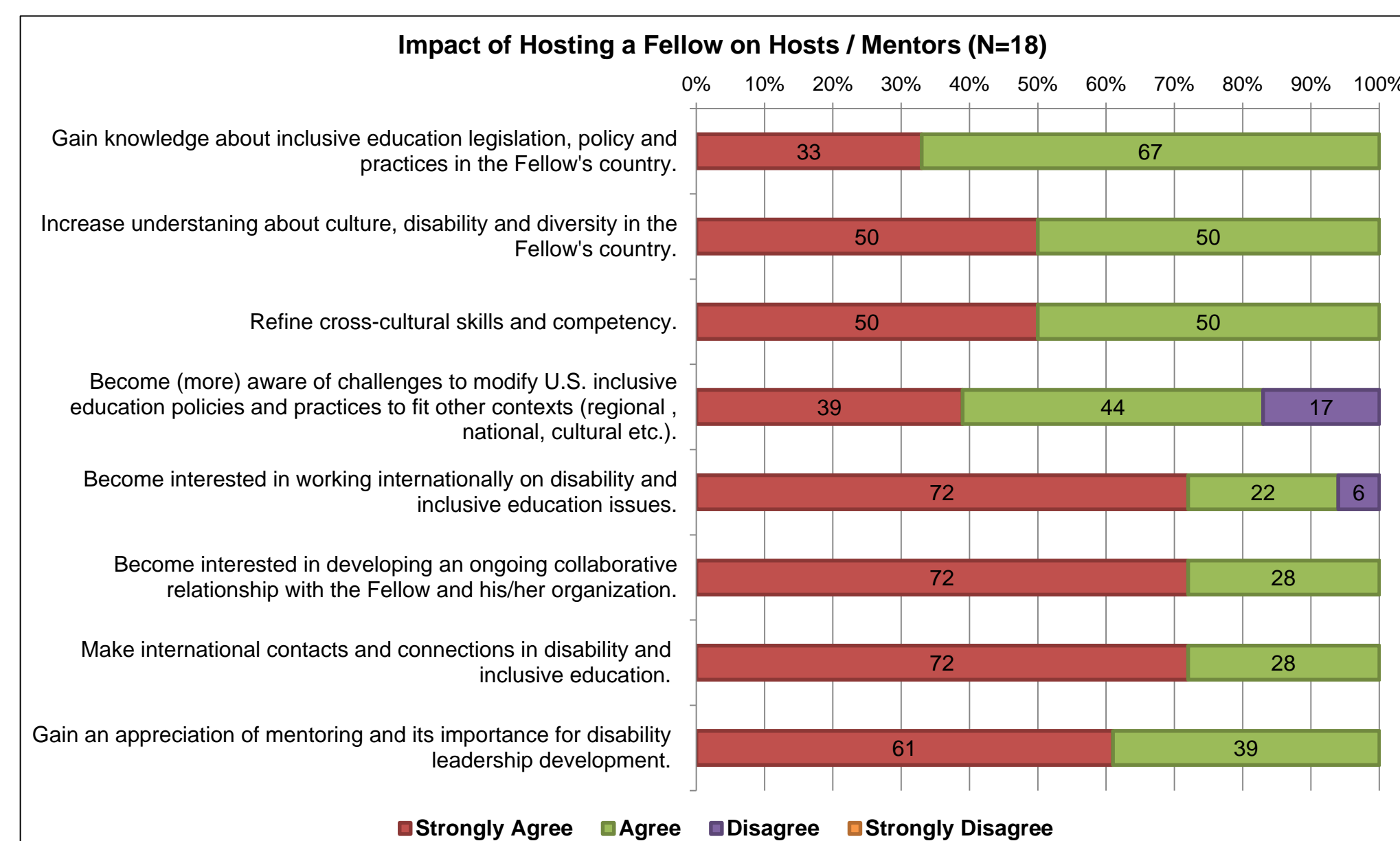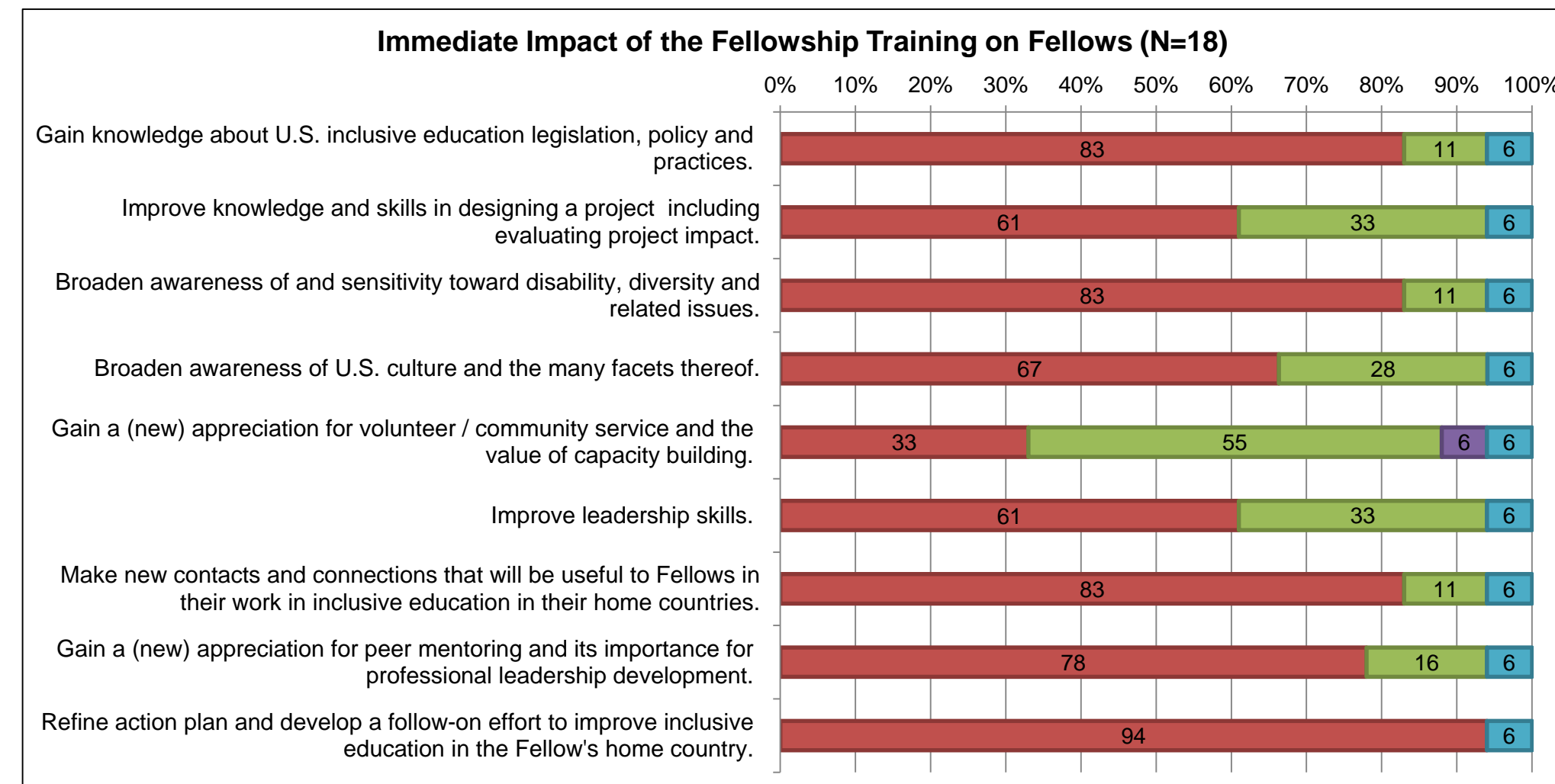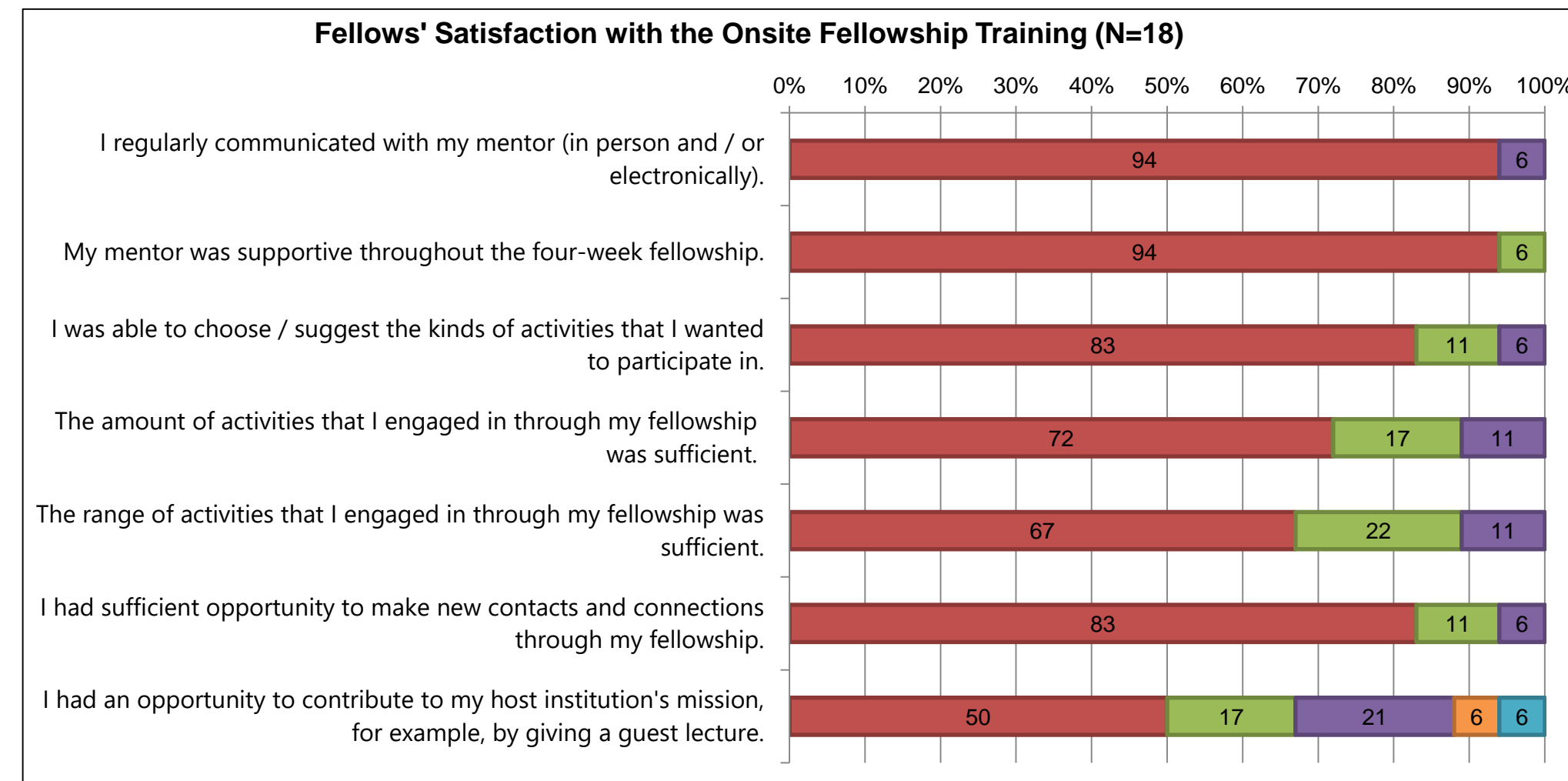
Program Objectives

- Created opportunities for 19 Fellows from Brazil, Kenya, Peru, and Tanzania to study inclusive education best practices across the United States.
- A total of 16 institutions, including 12 AUCD network members, served as hosts providing a four-week-long individually tailored fellowship training, including mentorship and community service.
- Fellows collaborated with an assigned host mentor to develop a project focusing on a particular inclusive education issue they identified in their application to the ADA Program.
- Fellows participated in weekly topical leadership seminars facilitated by ADA Program staff complementing Fellows' onsite training.
- Fellows gave a presentation of their project plan to their peers, U.S. Department of State officials and ADA Program staff at the end of their U.S.-based fellowship.
- Fellows also participated in a three-day-long Professional Fellows Congress in Washington D.C. where they networked with over 200 other Fellows from over 40 countries.
- Fellows implemented their individual inclusive education projects within six months of returning to their home countries and periodically reported on their progress to the ADA Program.
- Fellows and their host mentors devised a follow-on project, including a technical assistance visit by the Host mentor to the Fellow's home country.
- Fellows and mentors applied to the ADA Program for follow-on project funding. A total of eight follow-on projects were selected for funding.

Location of ADA Program Host Sites

Select Evaluation Results

Fellows' Satisfaction with the Onsite Fellowship Training (N=18)

Immediate Impact of the Fellowship Training on Fellows (N=18)

Impact of Hosting a Fellow on Hosts / Mentors (N=18)

Legend: ■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

Select Outcomes

ADA Fellow presentations, funding, and awards:
- Four Fellows presented their work at the 6th Annual Disability Rights in Pretoria, South Africa, and one Fellow presented at the 2018 East Africa Conference on Inclusive Education in Nairobi, Kenya.
- Six Fellows submitted funding applications to sources including the U.S. Department of State Human Rights Engagement Fund, the Professional Fellows Alumni Engagement Fund, the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, UNICEF, and to the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Most were funded.
- Kenya's National Diversity and Inclusion Award in the People with Disabilities Inclusion Category, and the Communication Authority of Kenya's Kuza Award for quality cultural programming.

Fellows participated in local and national committees impacting inclusive education policies, including:
- National Technical Committee on Digital Literacy (Kenya);
- Kenyan Ministry of Education Special Education Technical Committee;
- Coalición por el Derecho a la Educación Inclusiva in Peru; and
- Stakeholder forums that informed the development of the Sector Policy on Education for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities published in May 2018 by the Kenyan Ministry of Education, and the 2018–2022 Kenyan National Education Sector Strategic Plan (Special Education Chapter)

Individual Fellow programmatic successes include:
- Enrolled 817 out-of-school children with intellectual disabilities into 113 regular primary schools.
- Implemented weekly physical activities and provided materials and resources to physical education teachers so students with disabilities can participate alongside peers.
- Trained hundreds of families and teachers in Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) with a focus on integrating high-tech AAC options in home and school routines.
- Led roundtable discussions and drafted a report and action plan for inter-agency coordination by the Kenyan Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Social Protection.
- Facilitated the participation of children with disabilities and their parents in discussions that informed the development of the Sector Policy on Education for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities published in May 2018 by the Kenyan Ministry of Education.
- Organized a film week mobilizing community members about inclusive education and disability rights. The event helped increase school enrollment of children and youth with disabilities.
- Developed a teacher training toolkit for implementation in 21 low resource community schools in partnership with volunteers specializing in special education.
- Trained 95 educators including teacher trainees, practicing teachers, and educational assessment and resource teachers on inclusive education and universal design for learning.
- Conducted an early intervention community needs assessment utilizing PhotoVoice, with results informing the development and implementation of the "Teaching, Learning, and Care (TLC)" early intervention. TLC trains education, health and social service providers on detecting disability in children ages 0–3 and supports families during early intervention.
- Renovated an existing rehabilitation center to provide therapeutic services for children with disabilities, hold parent support groups, and train local schools on inclusive education.
- Recruited local vocational training centers to train youth with disabilities in occupational trades.
- Created an online library with materials and strategies for inclusion of Deaf students in classes.
- Facilitated the removal of steps and installation of an accessible toilet in a community development training institute.
- Developed the first Swahili digital reading application for children with developmental disabilities for use in inclusive schools.

ADA International Fellowship Hosts

We are deeply grateful to these organizations who hosted ADA Fellows:
- Center for Development and Disability, University of New Mexico
- Center for Disabilities, Sanford School of Medicine, University of South Dakota
- Center on Disability Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa
- Center on Disability and Community Inclusion, University of Vermont
- Institute for Disability Studies, University of Southern Mississippi
- JFK Partners, University of Colorado Denver
- Lakeshore Foundation, University of Alabama Birmingham
- Mailman Center for Child Development, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine
- Michigan Developmental Disabilities Institute, Wayne State University
- Munroe-Meyer Institute for Genetics and Rehabilitation, University of Nebraska Medical Center
- North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities, Minot State University
- Rural Institute, University of Montana
- School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, University of Massachusetts Boston
- United States International Council on Disabilities
- Westchester Institute for Human Development

ADA Fellow Goodluck Chanyika (fourth from left) and ADA Host and Outbound Fellow Dr. Wendy Parent-Johnson (seventh from left) with faculty from Patandi Teachers' College in Tanzania.

"I think it's a wonderful experience because what I identified [in Tanzania] is really useful...in rural communities and Native American communities in South Dakota. And what my experiences here with those were a perfect fit for me to be able to be helpful... the community dynamics were very similar."
-- ADA Host and Outbound Fellow Wendy Parent-Johnson, PhD

Conclusion

The ADA International Fellowship Program was developed to engage a global audience in striving toward AUCD's vision in which all people, including those living with developmental and other disabilities, are fully included, participating members of their communities. This program provided 19 professionals from Brazil, Kenya, Peru, and Tanzania with significant leadership and learning experiences in the US; engaged numerous professional hosts, mentors, and homestay families in a cultural exchange; and funded eight AUCD network members to provide Fellows with onsite technical assistance to implement follow-on activities in their home countries. These activities have engaged teachers, parents, communities, governments, universities, and others in strengthening educational access for children with disabilities.

Ongoing international fellowship programming led by AUCD in partnership with ICI along with Humanity and Inclusion (formerly Handicap International) is focused on inclusive employment in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. For more information: https://pfp-idefellowship.org/

"It's this beautiful opportunity. Take advantage of being able to find the balance between helping somebody from a different culture...and...this learning experience for yourself. It's this opportunity that very few people get to have. So, embrace it."
-- ADA Host and Outbound Fellow Alyx Medlock, MS, CCC-SLP

ADA Fellow Raphael Mbiiji (in a white shirt) speaks with local women and children about the educational rights of children with disabilities during an outreach visit to Kitelewasi village in Tanzania.

ADA Fellow Cristina Higa (standing up) provides professional development to a group of early childhood teachers in Peru.

ADA Fellow Monica Mbelle (third from left) meeting with youth with disabilities pursuing vocational training and a parent (far right) in Tanzania.

ADA Fellow Amina Shaaban with children in a play group in which that early identification and intervention tools are being tested in Tanzania.

ADA Host and Outbound Fellow Alyx Medlock gives a teacher workshop on Universal Design for Learning in Tanzania.