



A U.S. non-profit supporting the programs of Uhambo Foundation of South Africa to empower people with disabilities in under-resourced settings.

The Need

Wheelchairs are one of the most commonly used assistive devices for enhancing the personal mobility of people with disabilities. An estimated 65 million people need a wheelchair. In most developing countries, only a small percentage of those who need a wheelchair have one. Inappropriate and low cost wheelchairs are often donated in large quantities without the necessary related services and clinical support. These donated chairs seldom meet the need of the individual users or the environment in which they need to be used resulting in wasted resources, disappointment and the development of serious secondary health complications.

“Providing wheelchairs that are appropriate, well-designed and fitted not only enhances mobility, but also opens up a world of education, work and social life for those in need of such support.” WHO 2008

The Challenges

NGOs, charitable organizations and international development agencies often donate and provide wheelchairs to people in need in developing countries. There are several essential principles of wheelchair provision that many programs don't necessarily incorporate:

- ▶ One size does not fit all. A variety of wheelchair designs are necessary to accommodate the user's environment and the user's health condition.
- ▶ An incorrect fit can cause severe injury.
- ▶ A wheelchair is a mechanical device and needs regular maintenance and repairs.
- ▶ Training is critical for the user and their caregivers.

In addition, national disability policy issues in less resourced areas such as Southern Africa are not fully developed to support the needs of people with disabilities thus preventing many in need from accessing services.

Background

Motivated by her own and other's needs, Shona McDonald, mother of a daughter with severe cerebral palsy, established Shonaquip CC in Cape Town, South Africa in 1992. Shonaquip is a social enterprise dedicated to improve the quality of life of people with physical disabilities by designing, manufacturing, supplying and supporting user-appropriate wheelchairs and postural support equipment.

Shona's work over the past 25 years has assisted in driving new and relevant policy and appropriate, sustainable practices in both the design and service delivery of wheelchairs in South Africa. Her work together with that of her partners has positively influenced policy makers, professional service providers, government and non government organisations and individual users of wheelchair services and their families.

Uhambo Foundation of South Africa

The Uhambo Foundation was launched in 2010 to expand the reach and impact of Shonaquip. In several Southern African tribal languages *Uhambo* translates into *possibilities* and *opportunities*. The South African-registered non-profit was formed to enhance the lives and create opportunities for people living with disabilities in under-resourced settings of the world by:

- ▶ Increasing awareness of and access to appropriate and innovative mobility and seating solutions
- ▶ Facilitating the access to holistic client-focused support services
- ▶ Driving policy change and research
- ▶ Advocating for and building an inclusive and empowered society for people living with disabilities

Due to the overwhelming back log of people in need of wheelchairs there is a critical need for funding of wheelchairs and devices, as well as training and clinical support in order to properly supply these chairs.

Uhambo Foundation will focus on Southern Africa in its early years and intends to expand to other regions in Africa, and eventually to other developing countries around the world.

Uhambo of U.S.

Uhambo is filing for 501c3 status and is registered as a non-profit in Colorado. Uhambo has been created to support the programs and activities of the Uhambo Foundation by educating and creating awareness in the U.S. of disability issues in South Africa, influencing leaders in the international development, global health and disability arenas, fundraising for Uhambo's programs and partnering with the private sector, international NGOs and nonprofits on relevant initiatives in Southern Africa.

I met Shona when conducting field work for graduate school in Southern Africa. I immediately recognized her passion and commitment to the cause and have provided remote project work for Shonaquip and Uhambo since 2009. I am honored to work with Shona and launch Uhambo U.S.!

At present, Uhambo U.S. is seeking the following assistance and support:

- ▶ Two board members who have a passion for disability issues, an affinity for Southern Africa and/or are social change makers. Quarterly board meetings will be held and members can attend via phone or other remote communication means.
- ▶ Seed funding for operations.
- ▶ Program funding for the following initiatives:
 - Mobile outreach clinics for four Southern African countries that would impact 500 children per year per country.
 - Providing appropriate wheelchairs for a community in Cape Town (see www.betterplace.org/projects/3110-empower-children-with-appropriate-wheelchairs).
 - Addressing the backlog on the South African Wheelchair Waitlists.
 - Wheelchair provision and support services for Namibia and Uganda.

Please consider joining us in this exciting journey to create a measureable impact for people with disabilities in Southern Africa. I look forward to setting up a time to discuss further Uhambo and your interests.

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