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Handicap International U.S. welcomes new Executive Director

Handicap International U.S.’ Board of Directors is pleased to announce the appointment of Jeffrey Meer as the next Executive Director of Handicap International U.S. With 27 years of experience working in the international humanitarian sector, Meer has held leadership roles at the U.S. Association for UNHCR, CHF International, and most recently, The Public Health Institute (PHI).

“Jeff’s commitment to humanitarian action and development, paired with his vision for Handicap International U.S. make him a clear choice to take the organization to new heights,” said Nancy A. Kelly, President of the Board. “His dedication to enhancing and protecting the rights of marginalized communities, be them people with disabilities or populations fleeing conflict, makes him a perfect match to the Handicap International family.”

Meer served on the Handicap International U.S. Board for the past year. He is also a long-time donor to the organization, which is decorated with awards including the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize (co-recipient as a founding member of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines), and the 2011 Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize.

“Handicap International is a leader in enhancing and protecting the rights of people with disabilities in some of the world’s most challenging contexts,” Meer said. “Our friends and donors rely on Handicap International teams to ensure that no one is left on the sidelines of their communities, especially during natural and man-made disasters. In practice, that means seeking out the most vulnerable people and connecting them to life-saving aid and vital health services like rehabilitation.

“A core component of our actions involves standing up for the rights of people with disabilities, so they can participate in school, the workforce, the healthcare system, and civil society. We must also continue to protect civilians living amid explosive remnants of war by destroying the explosives that pollute their land and teaching them how to stay safe.”

Meer is the third Executive Director of the U.S. office of Handicap International. His predecessor, Elizabeth MacNairn, served the organization for more than six years, four of those as Executive Director. During MacNairn’s tenure, the U.S. office nearly doubled
income from institutional donors, foundations and grants to $10.5 million (unaudited 2014 result), and realized $850,000 in private donations in 2014.

Meer comes to Handicap International from PHI, where he served as the Special Advisor for Global Health Policy, coordinating 18 global health programs, conducting congressional and administration advocacy for global health, and creating new global health initiatives, including a focus on non-communicable disease prevention.


Meer then became the founding program officer for peace and security at the United Nations Foundation. Later he became Executive Director of the U.S. Association for UNHCR, where for five years he led efforts to raise awareness and funds on behalf of the UN Refugee Agency.

Meer is a graduate of Dartmouth College, where he earned a degree in French literature. He speaks French, German, and Cantonese Chinese, and resides in Silver Spring, Maryland.

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About Handicap International
Handicap International is an independent international aid organization. Its teams have operated projects in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster for 33 years. Working alongside persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, our action and testimony are focused on responding to their essential needs and improving their living conditions. Since it was founded in 1982, Handicap International has set up development programs in more than 60 countries and intervenes in numerous emergency situations. More than 3,500 people currently work for the organization. Handicap International is one of six founding organizations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), the co-winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, the 1996 Nansen Refugee Award, and the 2011 Conrad N. Hilton Humanitarian Prize.