

**LOCATION**

20 countries worldwide

**PARTNER**

MOTIVATION CHARITABLE  
TRUST, UK

Motivation is an international disability charity based in Bristol. Since 1991 it has established 15 self-sustaining projects in 14 countries, helping more than 18,000 people.

**SUMMARY**

The project aims to address the huge demand for appropriate, low-cost wheelchairs and associated services for wheelchair users in developing countries, through the initiation of high-volume wheelchair production and a global wheelchair distribution network.

**PERIOD OF FUNDING**

August 2001 to May 2002

**GRANT**

£100,000

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# WorldMade wheelchairs

**BACKGROUND**

**W**ithout wheelchairs, many disabled people can become prisoners in their own homes, unable to access education or employment. That is why the estimated 25 million people in the world who need a wheelchair, but do not have one, are often among the most disadvantaged and poor in society. A suitable wheelchair can be a vital means of mobility, enabling participation in family and community activities, from income generation to advocacy of human rights.



Motivation

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## THE PROJECT

The **WorldMade** project aims to address this problem by establishing an international production centre to manufacture a large number of high-quality, low-cost wheelchairs for distribution to local partner groups in places such as **Sri Lanka, Romania, Nicaragua and India**. The range of designs will be versatile enough to meet the individual needs of wheelchair users in developing countries worldwide.

Regional centres would:

- assemble and distribute WorldMade wheelchairs
- provide training for organisations in the surrounding area to establish further wheelchair distribution outlets
- supply wheelchairs to people who need them in developing countries, with the appropriate assessment, prescription and user training
- enable local partner organisations, previously occupied with small-scale wheelchair production, to concentrate on issues that **Motivation** has found to have a bigger impact on the quality of life of wheelchair users, including health education, mobility skills training and income generation.

KaR funding enabled Motivation's industrial designers to research and develop a simple, 'low-tech' wheelchair design. A prototype of this design underwent trials in Sri Lanka. As a result, Motivation now has a new and innovative wheelchair design for developing countries, based on feedback from wheelchair users in Sri Lanka and input from the **Spinal**

**Injuries Association of Sri Lanka**. The new design is a three-wheeled wheelchair with a folding backrest and quick-release wheels for ease of transport. Upon arrival at the distribution centre, the wheelchair can be adjusted to fit individual wheelchair users.

Wheelchair users in Sri Lanka have reacted positively to the wheelchair design. For example, field-trial results have revealed that, because the trial chair has only two back straps and one bottom strap instead of the usual four, users can

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sit back more comfortably.

Designs for a 'high-tech' wheelchair are taking longer to develop and test, and this is an area of work that will continue.

Motivation has also produced a report on wheelchair financing. This looks at the potential for loans to help users buy a wheelchair, and also at the potential for using the Internet

for raising money to buy wheelchairs. Establishing adequate wheelchair financing systems is of primary importance to Motivation, ensuring that everyone has access to an appropriate wheelchair, whether or not they can afford it.

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## LESSONS LEARNED

- It was planned that the WorldMade project would run in four countries concurrently, gathering feedback on the wheelchair design from wheelchair users in all four countries during the research and development phase. However, this was not feasible within the funding available, so the programme limited user feedback to one global region. Despite this limitation, this feedback was found to be extremely useful and produced some excellent results for the design team. Though initially piloting the programme in Sri Lanka, Motivation aims to hold user trials in further locations.
- Team collaboration for wheelchair design development is vital. Initially, one chief designer handled the wheelchair design, but Motivation included a seating specialist and found that the results have far exceeded expectations.
- Dissemination of lessons learned is an important element of the project.
- It has been difficult to fundraise for the development of a wheelchair design and this has slowed down progress on the project.

## FUTURE PLANS

The KaR-funded stage of this project is now complete. Motivation will continue to work towards the long-term objective of the WorldMade project, to establish an international production centre for low-cost, appropriate wheelchairs. It will draw on funding from the **Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund**, the **Audi Design Foundation** and the retailer **B&Q**. Motivation is continuing to fundraise for work in 2003-2005.

Part of the KaR-funded phase of the project was to consolidate the work Motivation has done in areas such as producing training materials for wheelchair users and researching the options for wheelchair financing systems. The intention is to make this information accessible to more organisations worldwide.