



A Role Playing Exercise of a Wheelchair Program in Central America

Wheelchairs for the World

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This sheet of paper describes your role and gives you instructions. In order to achieve the intention of the exercise, please do not share this paper or discuss the contents with anyone else unless directed to do so by an instructor or these instructions.

After reading these instructions, you will get together with the other people who have been assigned your role to discuss it and make sure everything is clear to you. After this, you will join a group of the other players in this exercise. Your role is listed below:



Local Wheelchair Fabricator:

Max(ine) Mechanic

You are participating, as the character described below, in a meeting with a visitor from the United States, Martin Moneybags. Stay in character throughout this exercise.

You are an experienced metalworker in Central America who has been relatively successful in the industry. Your son was afflicted with spina bifida when he was a child, leaving him a paraplegic. When you learned of appropriate wheelchair designs meant to be built and used in developing countries, you changed your business and began building wheelchairs in your shop. Since that time you have adopted and improved a design developed by Whirlwind Wheelchair International from the U.S. and your shop now employs 10 wheelchair riders building chairs as they learn valuable skills.

Your organization is thus providing value-added economic activity, vocational training for disabled people, and wheelchairs that work well and hold up in the tough conditions they are exposed to in your country. Your workshop can turn out 30 wheelchairs per month, at a cost of \$300 per chair (materials, labor, etc.). They work 10 months a year, giving you the capacity to produce 300 chairs a year.

You know that Mr. Moneybags is somehow related to disability assistance in developing countries. However, in the past your only experience with people like him is that they import low-quality chairs and dump them on the market at very low prices. This drives the price down to a point where you cannot sell your chairs and threatens your business and the employment of your workers. The irony is that most of these donated chairs are of such low quality that within a year they are out on the street rusting away or brought into your shop to be fixed. Unfortunately, since they are manufactured abroad with different parts and methods, it would usually cost more to fix them than to build a new, higher quality chair. Your chairs will typically last at least 10 times longer under heavy use and allow a rider much more freedom of movement on the rough terrain in much of the country.