

Remarkable Jessica Cox to join Handicap International in Ethiopia  
*This April, the world's first armless pilot will inspire children with disabilities and encourage Ethiopians to include all children in school*

Takoma Park, Maryland and Tucson, Arizona February 11, 2013 – Handicap International will host Jessica Cox —the first person without arms to obtain a pilot's license— in Ethiopia in April 2013. Thirty-year-old Cox, who was born without arms, will visit the charity's inclusive education project to speak with children with disabilities and their peers about how to "think outside the shoe." Her visit will be filmed as part of the documentary RIGHTFOOTED, which tells the story of Cox' life and her desire to redefine what it means to be disabled.

The visit will reinforce Handicap International's on-going efforts to foster inclusion of children with disabilities in Ethiopian schools, and to help change long-held societal beliefs about the role of people with disabilities. Handicap International runs inclusive education projects for children with disabilities in 20 countries.

Cox has achieved more using just her feet than most other people dare to aspire to. She achieved a black belt in Taekwondo when she was 14, and earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Arizona by typing papers with her toes. She always dreamed of becoming a pilot, and in 2008, after years of persistent effort, she achieved this goal by soloing a single engine 1946 415C Ercoupe Airplane. Cox loves adventure sports—rock climbing and snowboarding to name a few—and she just made her first sky dive in January. Cox is named in the Guinness World Record for being the first armless person certified to fly an airplane.

Such achievements have allowed her to fulfill another dream: to become a motivational speaker, mentor, and advocate for the alternately abled. In the past four years she's traveled the world from Europe to Australia and Africa, sharing her inspirational story. She has spoken at the World Economic Forum and the Pentagon, met Pope Benedict XVI and President Obama, and appeared on The Ellen Show and CNN. She also recently won a Susan G. Komen Inspiration Award.

During her speaking engagements and in her personal time, Cox counsels individuals with disabilities and their families, emphasizing the importance persistence and dreaming big. "There are two words I've eliminated from my vocabulary," Cox says. "'I can't.' Because once you say those words, you've already failed." She also emphasizes the importance of opportunity for persons with disability.

Cox's message is especially important in low-income and post-conflict countries, where people with disabilities are often shunned and denied the same opportunities available to others in their communities. According to the World Report on Disability, 98 percent

of children with disabilities living in low-income countries do not attend school.

“In Ethiopia, only one percent of children with disabilities are educated,” says Matteo Caprotti, Handicap International’s country director for Ethiopia. “Most parents of children with disabilities do not think they can benefit from going to school.”

Jessica Cox says, “I am extremely excited for the opportunity to work with Handicap International in furthering their goals in Ethiopia. My accomplishments are just as much a story of opportunity as they are about possibility. I hope that sharing my story will help Ethiopians realize that children with disabilities should be given the same opportunities that children without disabilities are given.”

Handicap International’s inclusive education project at six primary schools in Ethiopia is developing a model of “disability-friendly schools” that foster the inclusion of children with disabilities. This important work, which is done in collaboration with local disabled people’s organizations, regional education bureaus, and USAID, impacts hundreds of children, including about 40 who are living with disabilities.

While in Ethiopia, Cox will work directly with children, their families, teachers, members of disabled people organizations and Handicap International staff. In an effort to reach a wider audience, she also hopes to meet with government officials and to speak on local television and radio programs about her life and accomplishments. The goal is to change attitudes about what’s possible, and to inspire change.

Jessica Cox is available for interviews from February 11-16, and after Feb. 16 by Skype or email. To co-ordinate please contact Nick Spark at the number below.

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**About Handicap International**

Co-winner of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize, Handicap International is an independent international aid organization focused on persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups. Our actions and testimony respond to their essential needs, improve their living conditions, and promote respect for their dignity and rights. Working in situations of poverty and exclusion, conflict and disaster since its founding in 1982, Handicap International has run development and emergency programs in more than 60 countries. Through a network of eight global offices (Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States), staff mobilize

resources, jointly manage projects and work to increase the impact of the organization's principles and actions. Handicap International is one of six founding organizations of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. The charity received the 2011 Hilton Humanitarian Prize. Handicap International takes action and campaigns in places where "standing tall" is no easy task. <http://www.handicap-international.us>

### **About RIGHTFOOTED**

RIGHTFOOTED tells the story of one woman's courage, determination, love and faith. The documentary will chronicle the life of Jessica Cox— a woman packed with resilience and hope. Her story will touch anyone who feels different, limited or who has a disability, and show them how to look beyond their limitations, as Jessica has. Acclaimed documentary filmmaker and writer, Nick Spark, is producer and director of RIGHTFOOTED. Spark's most recent film is the Emmy award winning [The Legend of Pancho Barnes](#), which profiles famed female pilot Florence "Pancho" Barnes. Spark has directed and produced numerous documentary and industrial projects. The documentary is scheduled for release early next year. RIGHTFOOTED is currently raising funds to support Cox's trip to Ethiopia. Learn more at about the campaign at <http://www.indiegogo.com/projects/rightfooted-a-documentary-about-jessica-cox> and about the movie at Jessica's website, <http://www.Rightfooted.com>