

Access Makes All the Difference

Emmanuel Safari

BEFORE YOU READ: Read the title and the headings. What do you think “access” means in this context?

A Disability Leads to Pity and Neglect in My Country

I was born with a problem in my heart. I was very weak. When I was a child, I couldn’t do anything on my own. My mother was by my side every single day. I needed her help to take even the smallest step. My legs could not support me. My arms were too weak to lift anything. Even eating was difficult.

In my country, the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa, the government does not provide resources to care for vulnerable people. I experienced so much pity and neglect growing up.

More Resources in the U.S.

When I arrived in the U.S., everything was different. Many places in this country are accessible for people with disabilities. I was amazed. I could visit museums and historical sites, and I would be treated with care and respect. Many places have wheelchair access. They have smooth wooden boardwalks and ramps for my wheelchair. Often the staff are friendly. They want to make sure all people feel welcome.

In the U.S., I have also received the benefit of medical treatment, physical therapy, and prayer. In Charlottesville, Virginia, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) helped me access good medical care. I don’t have a job yet, but I have medicaid. I can get the physical therapy I need.



The Democratic Republic of Congo (DCR) is a country in central Africa.

Faith, Support, and Healthcare Can Mean a Full and Happy Life

We are a Christian family, and we lean heavily on faith. Consistent support has made me stronger. I can now walk and lift things. People who had once given up on me are shocked to see me. I am a lucky man.

Being disabled or missing a part of your body should not be the end of the world. When society makes things accessible to us, and when we can get healthcare and physical therapy, we can live full and happy lives.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Fill in the blanks: Emmanuel says that in his country he was treated with _____ and _____. In the U.S., he is treated with _____ and _____.
2. Emmanuel provides evidence that he is treated with care and respect. What evidence does he provide? Be specific.
3. Read the title again. How does “access” make all the difference, according to Emmanuel?

Emmanuel Safari is a student at Thomas Jefferson Adult Career Education at Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville, Virginia. He wants to thank people who work with people with disabilities. He says, “Your work is amazing. You bring hope and healing to those who need it the most.”

