

WikiRights



**Leveraging Internet Technology
to Realize Rights:
Closing the Take-Up Gap**

High-Impact, Low-Cost Solution to a Big Problem:

Narrowing the Social Rights Take-Up Gap by Streamlining Access to Online Information

Only a small percentage of the people eligible for social benefits actually realize them. This Take-Up Gap is especially harmful to the poorest and most disadvantaged members of society. However, if significantly improved take-up were achieved, the number of people living in extreme poverty would drastically fall. A leading cause of this Take-Up Gap is a very wide knowledge gap: many people do not know their rights or the administrative steps they need to take to realize them, and there is no straightforward, reliable, and central resource they can refer to for this information. A modern, open-source platform, WikiRights offers a cost-effective and high impact solution to a big global problem by concentrating all information on rights, benefits and entitlements in a centralized user-friendly website. “All Rights” (Kol-Zchut) has implemented a WikiRights platform in Israel that within just 4 years of operation is already being used by 20% of the population.

This proposal is a call for action: We aim to find global and country-level leaders that will bring this model to a global scale, starting with a first implementation in a federal country such as the U.S.

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Motivation for WikiRights	4
Goals and Objectives	5
How We Will Meet Our Goals: WikiRights Methods, Strategy, Scaling	6
Measuring Success	13
Impact	14
Contact Us	14

Executive Summary

THE TAKE-UP GAP: WHAT IT IS AND WHY IT IS A PROBLEM

One of the main challenges of social policy across numerous countries is that a relatively low percentage of eligible persons actually manage to realize their social rights. Research indicates that take-up levels of social benefits are low across many countries and programs: most estimates among OECD countries range from 40% to 80%, while estimates of unemployment compensation programs range from 60% to 80% take-up. This is especially true for the most disadvantaged members of society, who suffer the most from low rights realization. In the U.S., for example, estimated take-up rates among different social benefits average at just 57%, and evidence suggests that these rates are declining.¹

*Only a Small Percentage of those Eligible For Social Benefits
Actually Realize Them.*

Low rates of take-up reduce the impact of social programs in achieving their goals, such as poverty reduction. The figures are startling: Taking the US as an example, the number of people in families with children living in extreme poverty is estimated to fall by about 70% if all persons entitled to benefits (such as food stamps, Supplementary Security Income, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) took full advantage of them.^{2 3 1}

*... but if Full Take-Up Were Achieved, the Number of People
in Families with Children Living in Extreme Poverty would
dramatically fall, in the U.S. they Would decline By More
Than 70%.*

The Take-Up Gap may also aggravate socioeconomic disparities and impede efforts to properly assess government programs, since ineffective policy implementation may be conflated with ineffective policy.

¹ It should be noted that the estimations presented here are based on available research only. Some of these sources are not current enough, and more research needs to be done in order to establish the accurate and up-to-date figures. Nonetheless, we believe that even this partial information is sufficient to establish the severity and scope of the take-up gap problem.

WIKIRIGHTS: A PROPOSED SOLUTION

A leading cause of this Take-Up Gap is a very wide knowledge gap: many people do not know their rights or the administrative steps they need to take to realize them. Although much information on social rights is available on the Internet, this information typically is either (1) written on official websites in bureaucratic or legal language that many potential users find to be inaccessible or (2) scattered across numerous non-official websites at varying levels of quality and accuracy.⁴

To address this problem in Israel, All Rights (Kol-Zchut) has created a wiki-based website, based on a model we call WikiRights, that provides the public with reliable information, in simple language, about effectively all⁵ of their country-specific rights, benefits, and entitlements (RBE). WikiRights content is produced and updated by an inter-sectoral and inter-organizational professional Knowledge Community, allowing for the integration, simplification, and centralization of up-to-date, robust RBE information.

WikiRights Israel has reached dramatic levels of popularity. After just four years, it serves 20% of Israel's population; has hundreds of partnerships with the Israeli government and NGOs; and has more than 5,000 content pages in three languages.⁶ We believe that WikiRights Israel is a Proof of Concept that can, and should, be scaled globally.

Our goal is to extend the model to the global level by launching an international organization, modeled on the successful example of the Wikimedia Foundation that facilitates and supports the development of WikiRights technology that fits large federal countries, as well as helping launch implementations around the world. As a first step towards this goal, we propose to start a pilot program in the US, and then to extend the model nationwide.

Implementing a WikiRights platform in the US, an especially vast and hierarchically complex federal system, will be a significant step towards building the necessary knowledge, leadership and software solutions to support new implementations in any democratic country.

Reducing the Take-Up Gap in a country like the US by merely 5% would translate to an estimated monetary value in the magnitude of tens and possibly hundreds of billions of dollars in additional benefits⁷. Compared to the relatively low costs of implementation, this project offers a uniquely high ratio of social impact return on investment.

This proposal is a call for action: We aim to find global and country-level leaders that will bring this model to a global scale, starting with a first implementation in a federal country such as the U.S.

*An Elegant and Low-Cost Solution to a Costly Policy
Problem: WikiRights Has Proven To Significantly Reduce The*

Social Rights Knowledge Gap by Improving Information Quality and Accessibility.

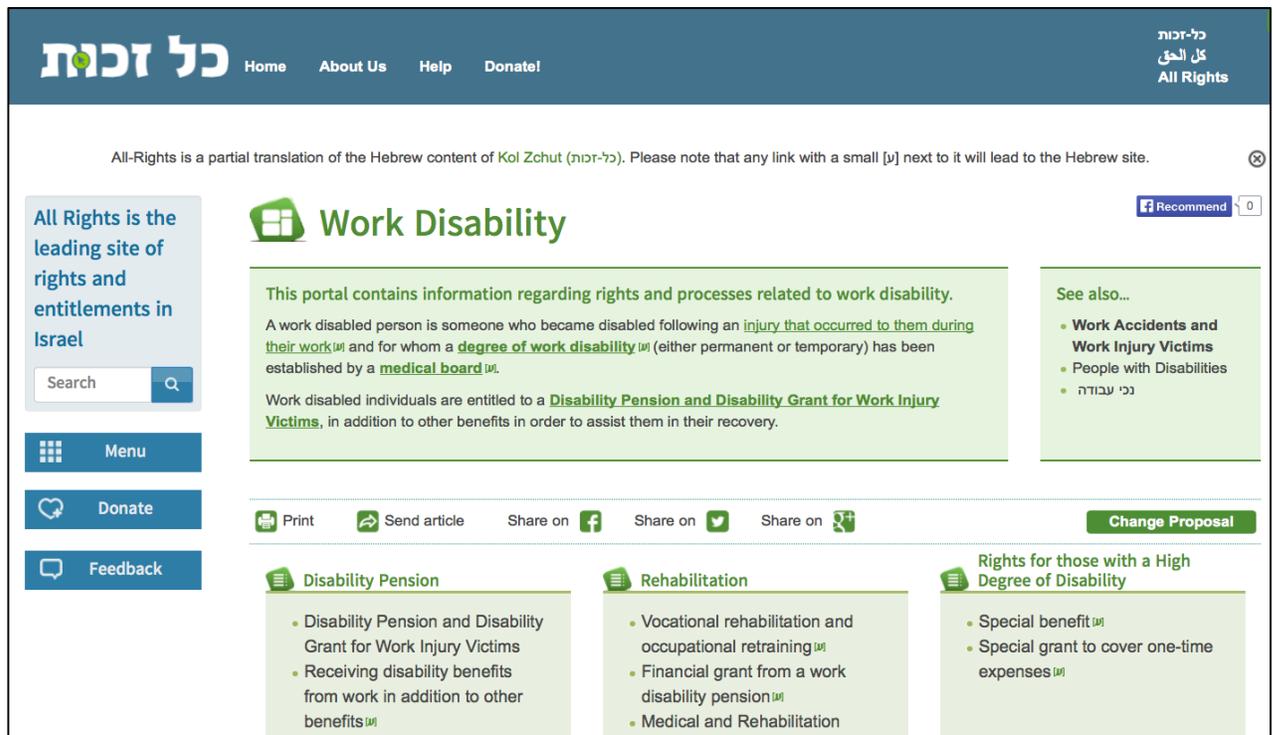


Figure 1: Sample (Work Disability) page from WikiRights Israel

THE ALL RIGHTS (KOL-ZCHUT) TEAM

All Rights (Kol-Zchut) is an Israeli non-profit organization founded in 2010 by software executives with a shared vision to solve the Take-Up Gap problem in Israel by leveraging modern internet technology.

Our Board of Directors is comprised of software experts, jurists, senior civil servants, academics, foundation executives and civil society leaders.

We are committed to provide country and international-level WikiRights leaders with the technological, methodological and consultation support they need to launch a successful second implementation of the WikiRights model, and eventually a global extension.

Dramatic Success of WikiRights in First Country Launch

As of December 2013, after fewer than four years of operation, WikiRights Israel achieved:

- **Serving 20% of Israel's population** (1.5 Million Unique users)
- **Collaboration spanning government and NGO sectors**
 - a. **Government partnership and official recognition:** joint-project contract with Israeli government for certain **WikiRights Israel domains to be declared the formal, national-level site** of all information relevant for specific government programs
 - b. Approximately **100 partner organizations:** government agencies, municipalities, NGOs, and legal clinics
 - c. More than 7,000 social workers and NGO staff, equivalent to approximately 20% of social workers in Israel, have been using the site every month
- More than 5,000 content pages covering most relevant domains such as employment, elderly, health, education, Holocaust survivors, and poverty.
- Three language sites (Hebrew, Arabic, English) to reach broad segments of the population

¹ Source: Hernanz, V., F. Malherbet and M. Pellizzari (2004), "Take-Up of Welfare Benefits in OECD : A Review of the Evidence", OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers, No. 17, OECD, Paris.

² Source: Zedlewski S. R., Giannarelli S., Morton J. and Wheaton L. (2002), "Extreme Poverty Rising, Existing Government Programmes Could Do More", New Federalism, Series B, No. B-45, April.

³ Information on welfare benefits take-up rates is available only for a small minority of OECD countries. Moreover, existing take-up rate information may be unreliable, systematically biased, or outdated. See for Hernanz et al. (2004) for a discussion.

⁴ Sources:

Daponte B.O., Sanders S., Taylor L. (1999), "Why do Low-Income Households not Use Food Stamps? Evidence from an Experiment", *The Journal of Human Resources*, vol.34(3), 612-628.

Dorsett R., Heady C. (1991), "The take-up of Means-Tested Benefits by Working Families with Children", *Fiscal Studies*, vol. 12(4), 22-32.

Warlick J.L. (1982), "Participation of the Aged in SSI", *Journal of Human Resources*, vol. 17(2), 236-260.

Zedlewski S. R., Brauner S., "Declines in food-stamps and Welfare participation: is there a connection?", *Assessing the New Federalism Discussion Paper*, 1999-13. Urban Institute, Washington D.C.

⁵ Specifically, WikiRights Israel content comprises more than 50 RBE domains including health, employment, elderly concerns, and poverty.

⁶ Information on improvement in social benefits take-up is pending collection and analysis.

⁷ According to the OECD (stats.oecd.org), the social expenditure in the U.S. summed up to a total of 2.84 trillion dollars in 2010 (cash and benefits in kind).