



Design for All

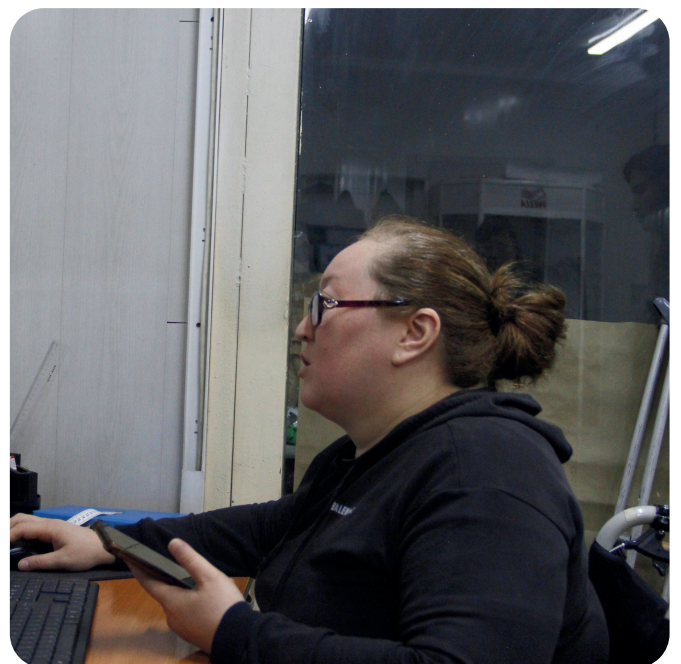
Mirgul's Garment Workshop

Mirgul Bolotalieva has long defied expectations of both what a woman, and a woman with a disability, can achieve in Kyrgyzstan. Not only is she the first and only woman in the country to master powerlifting, she is also a successful social entrepreneur.

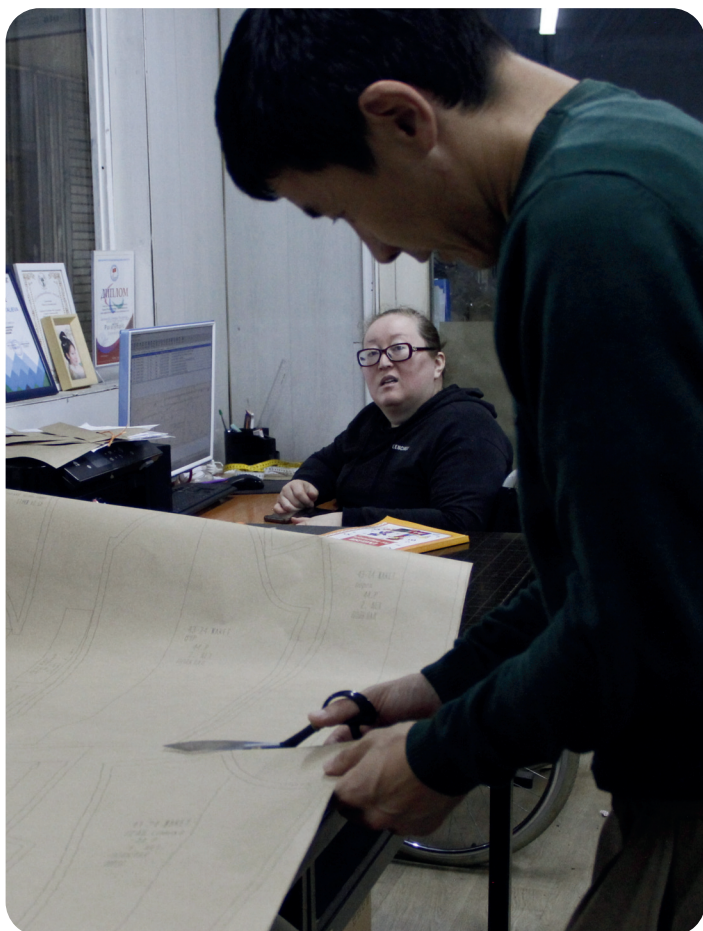
She found her calling in business and garment design at the age of 34, spurred on by family and friends. Although leaving her old secure job was scary, she wanted to pursue her childhood dream. Under the mentorship of a seasoned designer, Mirgul began honing her craft and found work. After 3 years, She was ready to go out on her own with her own business, 'Garments Master'.

Journey to Success

Mirgul learned of the Effective Governance for Economic Development (EGED) project, and Pillar 2 led by Acted, and took part in its Social Entrepreneurship Pre-acceleration Programme run by PEAK. After refining and then pitching one of the most promising business plans, she secured a loan from OXUS, Acted's sister microfinance institution. Acted then used blended finance to de-risk the loan, providing Mirgul with a grant (equal to the value of the interest repayments) to spend upfront as she saw fit. With this new financing, Mirgul purchased equipment such as an advanced laptop to design her garments and a plotter to print the designs. She also invested in expanding her office space.



Previously she used to spend all her earnings on fixing equipment, but now her business is thriving. The average monthly revenue has increased up to 10 times; recouping the initial investment in just a few short months. Her client base has also grown from just three per month to nearly 100. Thanks to this, she will soon complete her loan repayment in full.



Inclusive Practices

Mirgul's social responsible business practices and commitment to inclusivity is evident. She not only produces high-quality garments but also provides training and employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Mirgul oversees the work, giving her trainees specific deadlines but flexible schedules. This approach allows them to work from the location of their choice, minimising the need for travel. Mirgul has trained 9 students, including 5 people with disabilities, free of charge (in fact, even covering travel and food expenses). Mirgul later employs the trainees and offers a profit-sharing model so they can earn a percentage from each product they help create. She has now created 3 new jobs for people with disabilities while others trainees found new jobs in the sector.

The Road Ahead

Mirgul is studying industrial textile design and has big plans for the future. She hopes to expand further, opening design bureaus abroad where the demand for skilled and unique designers is high.

In parallel, she remains both busy (and famous) as a para-athlete; winning second place in her event at the the 2023 World Para Powerlifting Cup and taking part in the 2024 Paralympics in Paris.

With her commitment to excellence, Mirgul is not only breaking down barriers but also paving the way for a more inclusive and prosperous future for people with disabilities, women and her country.

