

Inclusive Education in Urban Settings: Innovative Initiatives

**Urban Children and Youth in the MENA Region:
Addressing Priorities in Education**

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From Exclusion to Inclusion in the Arab Region

- Arab countries' s policy of exclusion have been detrimental in terms of educational and employment opportunities for PWD.
- Although a wide democratisation process is on going, disability still remain out of the priorities.
- The grassroots participation and the bottom –up decision process for PWD is not yet a reality. This situation lead to :
 - needs and priorities of PWD and their parents are not reflected in the government action plan
 - most of the DPOs and parents organization are still lead by governments and are more based on service provide than on rights approach
 - PWD, DPOs and Parents' organizations from the grassroots base are not yet included in the pyramid of policy makers
- The legislative framework is still services-provide oriented but does not recognize the voice of PWD: till when PWDs are more receivers than actors, a sustainable development will not be reached.

The experience of Lebanon

- The wider freedom that NGOs can benefit in Lebanon, allowed DPOs to achieve a say in the promotion of disabled people's rights
- This dynamic leads DPOs to build up a strong lobbying and advocating movement
- Along the years, LPHU has promoted an advocacy campaign focusing on the inclusion of PWD in employment and education
- This lobbying have led to the adoption of the Lebanese government of Law 220/2000 which guarantees the rights of PWD
- Throughout a strong network, LPHU aims at sharing his experience with other DPOs in the region and building up a strong regional network enabled to have a say for lobbying toward inclusive education and policies.



What is Inclusion?

- It is a belief in every person's inherent right to participate fully in society.
- Inclusion implies acceptance of differences.
- Translating this philosophy into reality is a process that requires collaboration, teamwork, flexibility, a willingness to take risks, and support from a whole array of individuals, services and institutions.

Challenges for inclusion of child and youth in the mainstream school

- The predominance of institutional responses to education
- The predominance of private schooling
- Lack of trained professionals in schools
- Lack of awareness
- Lack of support and information for parents
- Absence of empirical information about past and current inclusion experiences in Lebanon.

Direct Indicators of mainstreaming

- Full-time or almost full-time presence of the child with disability in a regular classroom
- Learning similar or identical things as those offered in the general program
- The child being accepted by her/his fellow classmates
- The child's participation in a large gamut of recreational activities at the interior and exterior of the classroom
- The development of friendships is not limited to the school
- The child's capacity to demonstrate habits and behaviors analogous to those of her/his non-disabled peers in the same age group

Indirect Indicators of mainstreaming

- A climate of cooperation at the school
- The participation of teachers in training activities about inclusion
- A high degree of work satisfaction linked with a low level of absenteeism
- Utilization of diversified teaching strategies and a democratic classroom management characterized by flexibility in applying rules of functioning
- The implementation of methods that encourage the interaction between children with disabilities and their peers with no disabilities



LPHU Strategies

- Awareness-raising
- Advocacy and lobbying government
- Community development :pilot projects with schools
- Capacity building: training with teachers
- Resource development: create materials in alternative formats
- Research

Encouraging Youth participation: “Our Voice”



- Our Voice is an Inclusion Media project aimed to combine play and training to create a platform for voice for youth members of the Inclusion Network, using visual media.
- An avant-garde project new in Lebanon: combining the abilities of numerous youth with additional needs as well as youth without additional needs in a capacity building project.
- Participants acquired confidence as members of civil society, improved capacity building and life skills for the youth participants.
- Network’s capacity in public education, advocacy and campaign strengthened.
- Sharing knowledge, peer education, team/group work.

Involvement of Parents' organizations

- The inclusion of children revolves around three main axes that are intertwined: the family, the school and the local community.
- The active participation of parents of youth and children with disabilities provides the grassroots base that inspires and guides the development and implementation of national programs that are responsive to people's needs and therefore socially valid.
- Parents' organization can be targeted through :
 - Training opportunities to develop their advocacy skills
 - Empowerment through resources that familiarize them with their rights and can guide their advocacy efforts
 - Promote the development of progressive national policies for providing appropriate social support and services for children and adults with disabilities and their parents.

LPHU Experience with Parents' Organizations

With individual parents:

- Mobilization and active involvement in advocacy activities
- Individual visits for awareness on the rights foreseen by the law
- An example is the sit in organized by LPHU last June: parents of PWDs have been involved since the organizational phase and during the day

With parents' organizations members of the Inclusion network:

- The Inclusion Network is an informal collective of parents of children with additional needs, disabled persons' organizations and organizations for persons with additional needs that aims at achieving inclusion within the family, the educational system and society.
- The Network works together with specialists and experts, institutions and organizations that share and adopt our vision.
- The Network's efforts focuses on advocacy, awareness for parents and decision makers and lobby for the implementation of the law 220



Recommendations

- **Improving the role of governmental authorities**
 - The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs and local governmental bodies such as municipalities, need to work together to provide the necessary information and support for inclusion efforts, to promote criteria and indicators for mainstreaming disability and develop a closer collaboration with DPOs and parents
- **Implementing policies of inclusion**
 - This implies allocating the necessary financial, material and human resources to make inclusive education possible.
- **Strengthening the role of parents**
 - Provides parents with training and information necessary to advocate for the rights of their children in the mainstream educational system.



Recommendations/2

- **Recognizing and supporting the role of NGOs**
 - Disability NGOs are often placed in a position of filling the gaps present in the mainstream educational system. Yet, these NGOs need to be recognized by governmental authorities in terms of collaborations and funding.
- **The importance of early intervention**
- **Supporting educational change**
 - Curricula, teaching methods, and testing standards and formats need to be adapted to the needs of children with disabilities so that mainstream schools become more able to support these children.