

**Rehabilitation International**  
**Global Disability Development Fund / Africa Fund**  
**Final Report**

1. Executive Summary: the template below is only a guideline; however, please do not go over 5 pages.
2. Appendix with photos, links to materials made and other supporting materials.
3. Financial Report, signed by your finance manager, all Project Holders and Representative of your Board of Governors

Project: Education for All / A Model of Inclusive Education for Persons with Disabilities in Lebanon	Report No.: 2
Organization: Lebanese Welfare Association for the Handicapped	Name of Project-in-charge: Zeina Assi
Approved Funding: (USD) 150,000	Actual amount spent: (USD) 43,471
Reporting Period: October 2019-January 2020	

Executive Summary (not more than 5 pages):

1. Brief overview of your project and objectives

In Lebanon, reality is very harsh and unfair as discrimination starts early on at the school level, as in most cases, almost all regular schools are still not accessible for persons with special needs from an engineering or infrastructure viewpoint, and lacking on the level of information access and curriculum adaptation. The same is also true for vocational centers and most universities, including the most prestigious in Beirut as they have buildings older than 100 years, thus creating an additional obstacle for disabled persons wishing to consider higher education.

Thus, often disabled students are either left out of the educational system or enroll in non-licensed special education schools and fail to eventually integrate in regular schools where possible. However, with extensive awareness raising through civil society organizations, and compulsory education imposed by the Lebanese government, the problem is more apparent at university level, where students are more often than not discouraged from following through the system with little to no support, whereas some of them suffer from lack of accessibility, while others with hidden disabilities, are still scared to disclose their disabilities and have no access to resources that may adapt their academic requirements.

- Overall Objective:
  - To increase awareness on the rights of persons with disabilities to education,

accessibility and social inclusion, and to promote their abilities and qualifications as to what defines them.

- Specific Objectives:

- To enhance education opportunities for persons with disabilities through full merit scholarships and promote university campus accessibility at the national level.
- To create a pilot accessible environment at the university level to be implemented, in the future, in different universities across Lebanon.
- To provide a medium of support for persons with learning difficulties and other hidden disabilities.
- To promote positive attitudes towards disability at the university and national levels, through advocacy and volunteer activities.

2. Key output, outcomes and how you have measured them (as in the original proposal: if these were achieved or not and your comments)

**Result 1:** Financial sustainable support is available for eight students with disabilities or special needs accepted at PU, through merit scholarships managed by LWAH and co-financed by PU.

The initial plan was for eight scholarship beneficiaries, however, and due to the fact that students awarded all needed to go through remedial intensive English courses, so they will be able to follow through their college requirements, and graduate with the capability of competing for job opportunities, it was best to limit the number of students to six. It is further explained in the section below.

Students are:

Rola Khalife- Jad Hamade - Hussein Jammal - Malak Farhat - Mohammed Nouredine - Malak Boussi (academic year 2018-2019 – replaced by student Mariam Harajli) - Mariam Harajli (starting Fall 2019-2020)

Details of students shared in previous interim report.

**Result 2:** Model accessible classroom/center with different assistive devices is open to students in need of specific assistance.

The project team closely discusses students' specific needs as well as general appropriate assistive devices to include in the assistive technology classroom/center at PU. It has already provided multiple items to use: the Zoomtext Image Reader, the Text Aloud software and a high visibility keyboard to be used by low vision persons, in addition to an electric wheelchair. LWAH will be providing additional assistive technology items within the coming academic years, also matching arising students' needs.

**Result 3:** Support system is made available for students with learning difficulties or other hidden disabilities through LWAH rehabilitation programs.

Two out of six students already attend rehabilitation sessions at LWAH, and students Rola Khalife and Malak Boussi who were academically struggling were requested to attend

follow up sessions with the project's psychosocial counselor. Rola did and Malak failed to follow up and did not cooperate (more details in section below).

Support needed by students is thus always taken into consideration.

**Result 4:** Training available for 30 volunteer students through LWAH and PU on assistive technology and advocacy, to provide scheduled assistance to students with special needs and within the model accessible classroom.

Under this result the club (result 5) initiated multiple workshops, including a workshop on accessibility where a group of professionals, including a physical doctor, were invited to PU to speak about the importance of accessibility and the different mediums for accessibility, that would not only include physical accessibility, but also accessibility for persons with hearing disabilities and others with low vision or complete blindness. Another workshop was held during the Fun Socks Day on the occasion of the World Down Syndrome Day, between students and mothers of children with Down syndrome, raising awareness on their cases and the importance of early intervention in terms of therapy. A third training on assistive technology was conducted for concerned students and staff. Additionally, a group of PU students visited LWAH's rehabilitation center and toured its facilities, learning about disability, therapy and the importance of community based rehabilitation.

Additional workshops are planned for the academic year 2019-2020, postponed to the spring semester due to the security situation in Lebanon and university closure for an extended period which led to more focus on academics. Social activities and workshops will be carried on again during the spring semester.

**Result 5:** "Education for All" social club at PU is open to students and will conduct advocacy, fundraising and awareness raising activities.

Along with PU's people for people and people for children initiative programs, LWAH introduced the "Education for All" program through the already existing Community Service Club at the university. This club, which will continue to recruit additional students, assists students with disabilities at PU, advocates for their rights and promotes their independence. The club closely works with the university's Student Affairs department and with the Speech Therapy and Public Health Societies.

The club thus far has initiated multiple training workshops and awareness activities, including the celebration of World Down Syndrome Day, which included the visit of students with Down syndrome wearing fun socks, along with PU students, raising awareness about the importance of difference not being less. The event also included a Q&A workshop session between students and mothers of children with Down syndrome.

The Club also makes contacts with schools across Lebanon for Jad Hamade motivational speeches, raising awareness among students about the rights of persons with disabilities, namely the right to education. Jad visited three schools and also gave a motivational speech in LWAH's Annual Dinner. Additional activities are planned for the academic year

2019-2020.

### 3. Challenges and Issues arising and solutions

As with any projects issues arise along the way, from which we mostly take on lessons learned to improve project outputs. "Education for All" project has awarded six beneficiaries with special needs, full scholarships in the major of their choice. The initial plan was for eight scholarship beneficiaries, however, and due to the fact that students awarded all needed to go through remedial intensive English courses, so they will be able to follow through their college requirements, and graduate with the capability of competing for job opportunities, it was best to limit the number of students to six.

In fact, remedial English courses (9 credits of Intensive English and 6 credits of Freshman English do not count within the cumulative required credits for graduation but remain an extra cost on both the project and Phoenicia University's share.

Moreover and during project proposal phase budget was estimated an average of 7000\$ per year over three years, not taking into account that Engineering majors will have high tuition fees over 4 years.

Taking the above into account, it was best to limit the number of scholarships to six.

Student Malak Boussi, who suffers from extreme stuttering, is no longer part of the scholarship program. Her stuttering has caused her great deal of discomfort at the beginning of her fall semester and thus, she withdrew from courses she already registered and failed others. She kept struggling throughout the first year and failed most of her courses. She was professionally advised to follow a more suitable vocational education, where she would do better, but there was no feedback. Malak was offered counseling but did not follow up. She was covered for the first year as appears in the budget. –Student Malak Boussi's transcript is attached for reference, as it was decided that another student would better benefit from the scholarship opportunity.

Due to the recurring economic situation in Lebanon, Phoenicia University (PU), had already reduced its tuition fees before the 2018-2019 academic year, and thus could not cover the 20% tuition contribution for The Achievers Scholarship awardees. However, and for budget transparency, LWAH will be covering the 20% PU contribution.

Two of the students (of which one dropped out from the scholarship program) could receive co-financing from government agencies (since the parent is a government employee and benefits from school support), and following the no contribution policy by PU and the burden LWAH had to support, students who could be co-financed were urged to do so.

Mariam Harajli is the new student recruitment that was awarded the scholarship (photo enclosed) as replacement to student Malak Boussi starting Fall 2019-2020. She had just

graduated from school with great scores in official exams and following committee decision she was accepted to benefit from this opportunity.

Enclosed are detailed budget details as per the above.

#### 4. Self-evaluation and Lessons Learned

The project staff is closely monitoring students' progress and wellbeing as well as projects' activities.

Students' transcripts are shared and discussed between LWAH and PU. Students have completed their first year (fall, spring and summer semesters) and are currently enrolled for their Fall 2019-2020 semester.

A students' progress report was prepared and shared with RI for the previous academic year. An updated report should be prepared after the completion of the Fall 2019-2020 semester in February 2020.

This is an ongoing project, a pilot for inclusive education and involves students' commitment and seriousness. LWAH, in addition to follow up, promotes such a commitment and personally follows up on students achievement, objectives and future plans.

Most these students are doing well. Two students struggled and this was shared in the previous interim report, they were both given the chance to follow up with counseling, one did and was able to carry through with the scholarship and her education, the second –Malak Boussi- a case explained above.

This is a project we pride ourselves with; it has been a great tool for promoting the importance of university education for students with disabilities, in a country where it is not the norm.

Moreover, these students, if it wasn't for RI's GDDE, they stand no chance to pursue their education at an esteemed, accessible institution.

#### 5. Suggestions for dissemination

LWAH, along with students, PU and PU clubs, is currently working on a pamphlet that explains the project's main objectives and promotes the importance of inclusion in the educational system in Lebanon.

Moreover, LWAH will continue to look for funding in support of its Achievers Scholarship Fund, in order to carry on the cause and benefit additional students in the future.

It also has a parallel program, "The Workforce by LWAH", that specifically looks for job and training opportunities for people with disabilities, which, in turn shall encourage many youth with disability to pursue their education and receive assistance from such program.

6. Recommendations (both for your own organization and other organizations working in the same thematic areas)

The project shall invite RI's representative in the Arab World, Mr. Khaled El Mohtar, to visit the project and project beneficiaries. This visit was only postponed in light of the drastic situation in Lebanon and road blocking all over the country. It will soon be scheduled after the fall 2019-2020 finals.

The project shall also continue to promote the role of these students for promoting and motivation other people to accept their potential and respect their participation. They will also become the voice of so many students with disabilities who choose to give up on education, while it should never be the case.

The story of student Jad Hamade, and a video of one of his motivational speeches was previously shared with RI and he continues to be such an inspiration through the social club's work at PU and in different venues and mediums. We still hope for this action to be heard on the International platform through a possible participation in RI's congress in Denmark.

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