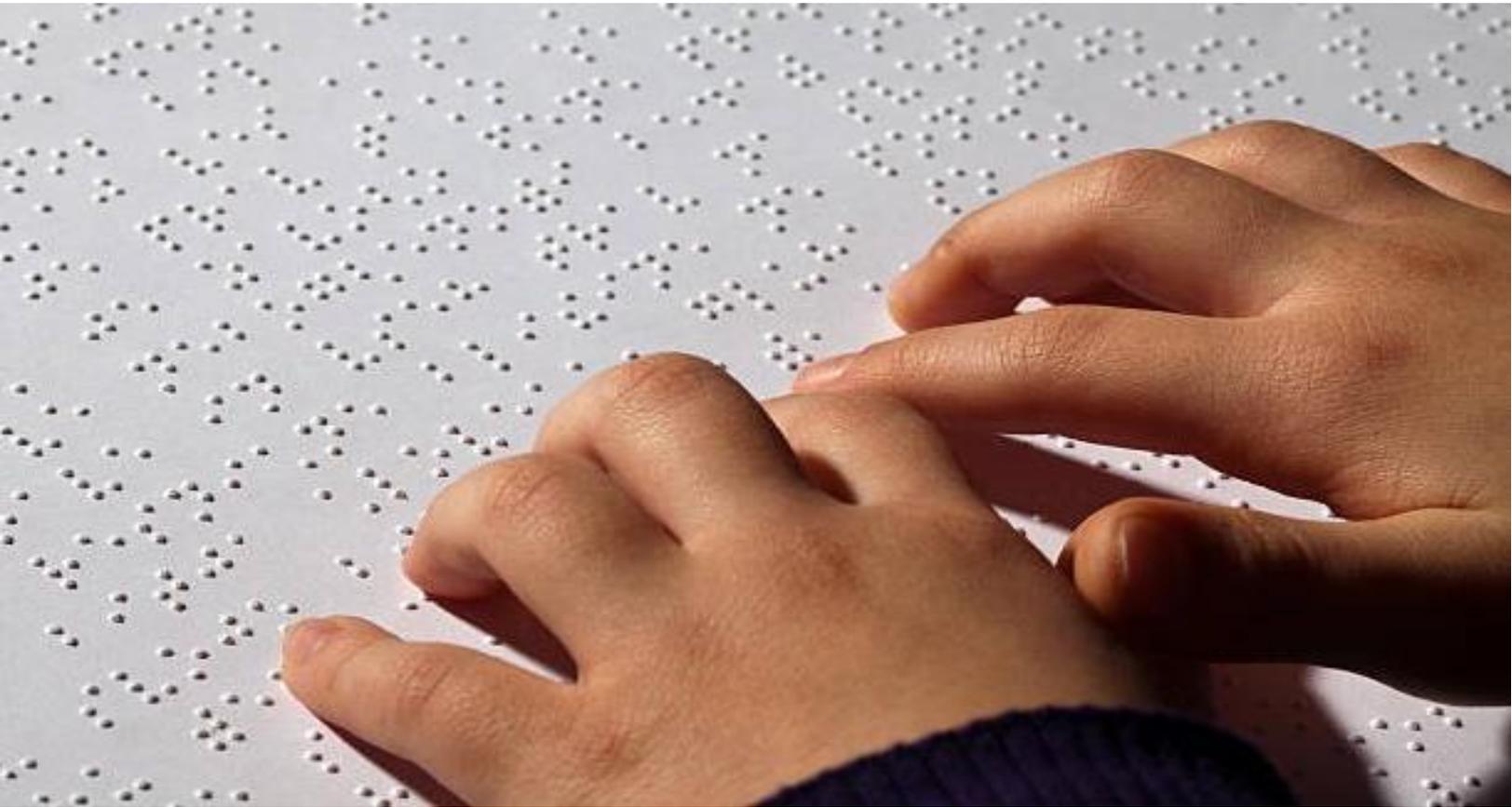




Early Intervention Procedures for Persons with Visual and Mild Mental Impairments, in Zarqa



West Asia-North Africa Institute, December 2020



This policy paper is within the framework of the project "Towards Social and Economic Inclusion of Young Marginalised Women and People with Disabilities" implemented by the WANA Institute and funded by IM, the Swedish Partner for Development in the Middle East. The project aims to provide 20 male and female trainees with the necessary skills and tools to gain support on issues of concern to marginalised women and people with disabilities by producing policy papers that deal with the two previous groups at the economic and social levels.

The WANA Institute envisions that the research could lead to governance and policymaking recommendations on the national level for Jordan as well as on the regional and international levels.

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Published by: The WANA Institute, Royal Scientific Society, PO Box 1438 Amman 11941 – Jordan

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Printed in Amman, Jordan

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1 Preface

Despite the great importance of early intervention programmes (a system of services to promote the development of children and support their families during their critical years) in the lives of persons with impairments and the impact of these programmes on their social, educational, practical and economic lives in the future, the issue of early intervention has not received much attention among associations, institutions, and ministries concerned with the rights of persons with disabilities, specifically visual impairments. This problem became apparent while studying the issue that, with the exception of a small minority, official and private institutions in Jordan lack early intervention programmes for people with visual impairments.

To date, more than 12 years have passed since Jordan ratified the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and government budget coffers are still poor when it comes to the integration of persons with impairments into society and early intervention services are still not available for all children aged 0-6, despite being stipulated in the articles of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law No. 20 of 2017 as well as an early intervention order that emphasised the need for rehabilitation and integration of children with impairments in society. Moreover, the importance of early intervention still lacks studies, research, and even attention especially in Zarqa Governorate.

Therefore, this policy paper studies the reality of early intervention services in Zarqa, its importance for people with visual and mild mental impairments, and the challenges facing them and their families in society. This policy paper is within the framework of the project, “Towards Inclusive Participation of Vulnerable Women and Persons with Disabilities in Social and Economic Life” implemented by the West Asia-North Africa Institute (WANA) with the support from IM Swedish Development Partner in the Middle East. The project aims to provide 20 male and female trainees with essential research skills and tools to enable them to advocate for issues of interest to marginalised women and persons with disabilities through the production of policy papers pertaining to social and economic issues facing these populations.

2 Executive Summary

The participation of children with impairments in early intervention programmes reflected positively on their future and the future of Jordan, in terms of qualifying them to effectively participate in society by becoming more able and daring to enrol in schools, which raises their opportunities to join the labour market.

However, our research – which concentrated on the city of Zarqa – found that there is a significant shortage of government centres for early intervention for persons with disabilities, as there is no centre concerned with providing early intervention services for persons with visual impairment, despite ‘vision’ being one of the most prevalent functional difficulties (impairments) in the Kingdom. It accounts for six per cent of all impairments, and also constitutes the highest

percentage among other impairments (functional difficulties) between the ages 5-9, at 2.2 per cent in 2015¹.

The research focused on persons with impairments in the city of Zarqa, who make up 11.6 per cent of the city,² 6.3 per cent³ of whom are persons with visual impairment.

The policy paper presents important results by analysing the data obtained through holding a set of in-depth interviews with government agencies and independent authorities, as well as a focus group discussion held in the presence of parents of children with visual impairment and minor mental impairment in Zarqa. In addition to reviewing a group of secondary sources, such as: books and researches specialised in early intervention, in order to identify the procedures followed to provide early intervention service in early intervention units in Jordan, specifically in Zarqa.

This paper presents a set of facts related to the reality of early intervention services in Jordan, specifically in Zarqa on early intervention units located in the city and the programmes applied therein particularly for people with visual and mild mental impairments and also highlights the role of parents in the success of the early intervention experiment.

According to research findings, it was concluded that there are a set of challenges facing the application of early intervention procedures and programmes for people with visual and mental disabilities in Zarqa, the most prominent being:

- Poor early intervention services in the city available to families due to their lack of knowledge about the existence of such centres (although there are few) in the city.
- The modest experience of early intervention service providers, as the families confirmed that their children's experience had failed in these centres,
- University education for working cadres lacks "experience."
- Difficulty accessing early intervention centres.
- The high cost of enrolment in private centres.

These challenges exist despite the fact that Article (24), Paragraph (D) of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law No.20 of 2017 states that "Civil health insurance shall ensure that persons with impairments have access to all kinds of medical treatment and rehabilitation services, including³:

- Surgeries, medicines, and all the needed vaccinations.
- Assistive tools and aids, including prostheses, splints, hearing aids, prescription glasses and lenses
- Physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech sessions, behavioural and, psychological therapy.

This was not brought up when the focus group discussion was held with families of people with visual and mild mental disabilities from Zarqa.

¹ The Reality of Disability (Functional Difficulties), Department of Statistics, 2015

² Department of Statistics, see:

http://www.dos.gov.jo/dos_home_a/main/population/census2015/No_of_pop_depend_on_GOV.pdf

³ The Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017.

3 Historical Overview

The concept of early intervention has received great attention in the field of educational sciences at the global level. Early intervention programmes are a logical extension of early childhood programmes, which came into existence in the late thirties of the last century, and which are supposed to improve and enhance positive practices for raising children with impairments in the early years of their life. Several studies have emerged that focus on childhood and growth, and two books in particular were published in the early sixties that established the concept of early intervention; the first book was *Intelligence and Experience* and the second one was *Stability and Change in Human Characteristics*. The two books emphasised the importance of the early stages of a child's life and that a child's intelligence in their first six years is affected by external factors⁴.

After the term "Early Intervention" emerged in 1961 as one of the terms used by the White House Committee on Mental Retardation, legislation was passed between 1967-1973 in the United States of America that called for intervention at the early age of 5.⁵

The stages of development of early intervention programmes become distinguishable and more accurate after the "Portage" programme in early intervention was developed in 1969, which was implemented by Shearer & Shearer, where its effectiveness was verified in various environments and conditions in many countries around the world. The Gaza Strip was the first city in to implement the programme in the region in 1984, the rest of the Arab World followed suit right after.⁶

Jordan started implementing the "Portage" programme in 1997 under the Jordanian Hashemite Fund's guidance with support from the Arab Childhood Council and is still in progress to date.⁷ The Jordanian Ministry of Social Development issued the Early Intervention Regulation No. (10) of 2017, which aims to integrate children with impairments into the local community, provide families with important information in this regard, reduce impairment rates and reduce the gap between the mentally impaired child and his actual age.⁷

⁴ Al Khatib, Jamal and; Al Hadidi, Mona. (1998). Early Intervention. An Introduction to Special Education in Early Childhood. Amman: Dar Al-Fikr for printing, publishing and distribution.

⁵ Al Qemsh. Mustafa (2014) Special Topics in Special Education. Amman

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Report (2017). Early Intervention Program for Children with Disabilities, Ministry of Social Development, Amman, see: 397=<http://www.mosd.gov.jo/UI/Arabic/ShowContent.aspx?ContentId>

4 Legislative Framework

The first draft of the Child Rights Law in Jordan remained locked up in government institutions and parliament for twenty years, at a time when the Kingdom was witnessing an unprecedented increase in cases of violence against children and the violations of their rights, which indicates the lack of attention given to children in the general policy in the Kingdom. As for children with impairments, the circle of neglect expands to ignore the importance of the upbringing and skills development of children with impairments by early intervention programmes capable of accommodating their impairments in accordance with local and international law and legislation.

In 2017, the order of early intervention centres for children with impairments was issued, which aims to integrate children with impairments and their families into the local community, and assess and meet their needs through programmes and services prepared for this purpose. Paragraph (A) of Article No. (5) of the order also stated that the functional staff of the early intervention centre must consist of a technical coordinator, a specialist in early childhood education, a physiotherapist, a speech and hearing specialist, a nurse, a social worker, and a special education teacher. However, through conversations with the director of one of the government centres that has an early intervention unit affiliated with the Ministry of Social Development, she said that there is only a special education specialist, a physiotherapist, an occupational therapist, and a speech therapist at the centre.⁸⁹

Paragraph (B) of the same article also stipulates the need for an administrative staff that includes a driver. Although, driver's role or whether he would serve the administrative staff or the children who need early intervention services has not been determined. A number of women met in a focus group discussion said that their main problem in accessing one of the early intervention centres in central Zarqa was their inability to take their children to the centre, and that if they wanted to take their children by public transportation, the buses would not pass by the centre as it was out of their range. This is what women considered to be an additional challenge that hindered their access to the centre, especially since Paragraph (F) of Article (29) of the Persons with Disabilities Law No.20 of 2017 stipulates "the provision of physical, psychological and social rehabilitation services in areas close to the places of residence of persons with impairments and their families, and to facilitate their access to these services".

Paragraph (E) of the same Law also stipulated the importance of providing programmes for developing social abilities for families of persons with impairments and training them on how to access available services and methods of healthcare, including the importance of screening for impairment and early intervention in this regard. Paragraph (G) stipulates "providing and licensing early intervention programmes in accordance with instructions issued by the Minister of Social Development for this purpose."¹⁰

⁸ Report (2017). System of Early Intervention Centres for Children with Disabilities No. 10 of 2017, Legislation and Opinion Bureau, Amman, see:

<https://lob.gov.jo/?v=1.9&url=ar/LegislationDetails?LegislationID:5842,LegislationType:3,isMod:false->

⁹ An interview with Karima Al Rifai, the director of Zarqa Comprehensive Centre. September 14,2020.

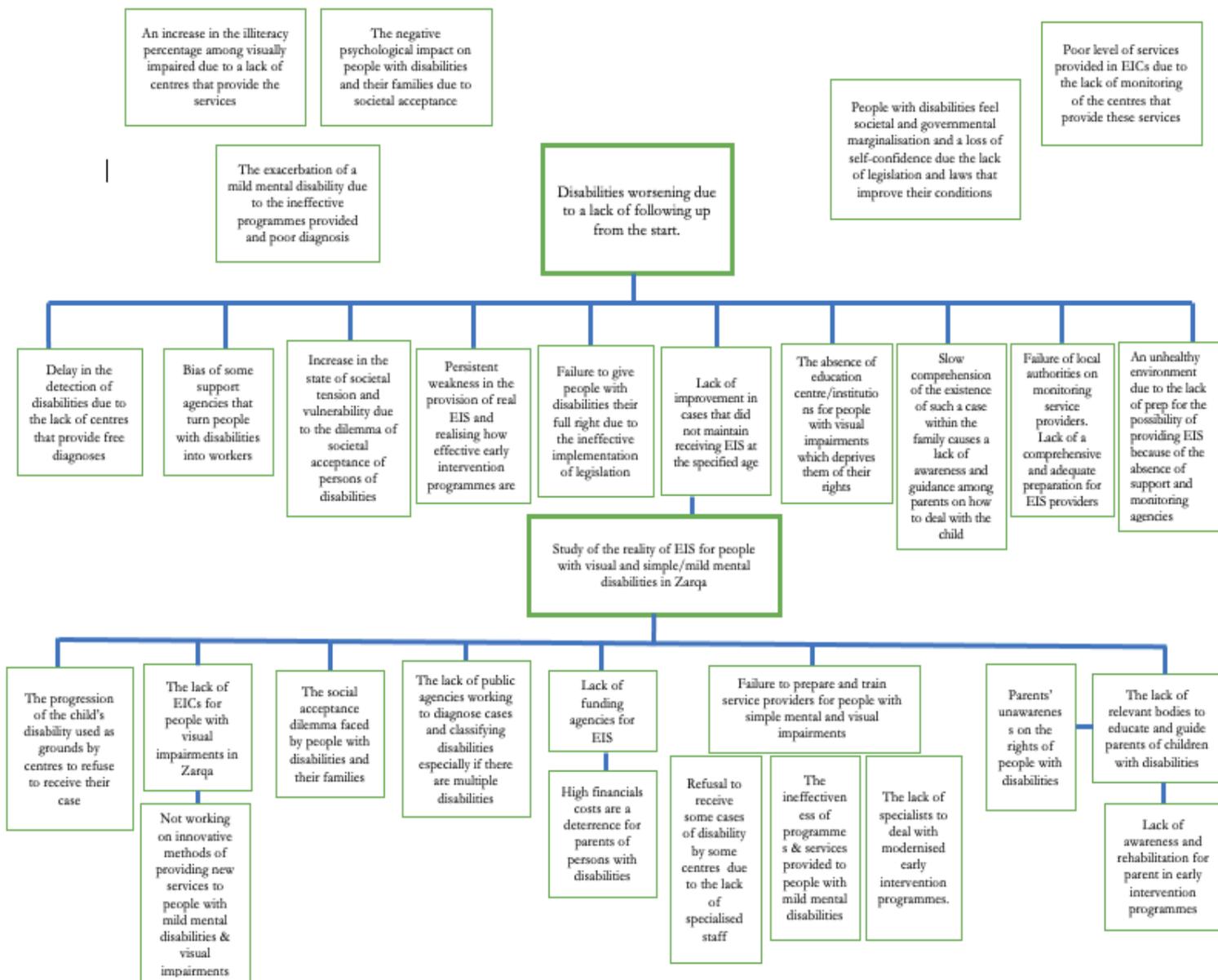
¹⁰ "Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law." 2017

Although, Jordan ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, which requires governments to guarantee the rights of persons with impairments through “legislative, administrative and other measures to implement the rights recognised in the convention,” the Jordanian parliament in 2017 passed the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, providing them with comprehensive protection in all aspects of society, however, the convention and the Law were not implemented. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which monitors how states implement UN Conventions recommended that the Jordanian government should “adopt a new national strategy for persons with impairments and a related action plan” in 2018 and ensure the allocation of financial, technical and human resources necessary for its implementation.

In a report on “Financing impairment rights in Jordan is insufficient”, Human Rights Watch confirmed the aforementioned stating that two years have passed and ministries have not allocated any funding towards the implementation of any initiatives related to persons with disabilities. This can be found from looking through the ministerial budgets from the years 2018 and 2019 published by the General Budget Department in Jordan. This includes: the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship \ the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs. Human Rights Watch also noted that the government has failed to fund key ministries to implement the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law, which was passed two years ago. Jordanian lawmakers thus should ensure that the 2020 budget provides adequate funding for policies and programmes to guarantee the rights of people with impairments.¹¹

¹¹ Human Rights Watch (2019). “Funding for impairment rights in Jordan is insufficient. The budget should be reviewed to provide adequate funding.” <https://www.hrw.org/ar/news/2019/12/23/336753>

5 Problem Tree Analysis



6 Analysing and Discussing the Results

6.1 First: The reality of early intervention services in Zarqa Governorate

6.1.1 Early intervention centres in Jordan

There are 11 governmental early intervention units operating in Jordan, including two in Zarqa: the first is Zarqa's Comprehensive Centre and the other in Russeifeh. The remaining nine units are in: Marka/Schneller Refugee Camp, Aqaba, Ma'an, Petra, Municipal Amman, South Amman, Ain al-Basha, Mafraq, Ashrafieh, and in the Koura District in Irbid.

There are a number of early intervention units distributed within Zarqa and can be found within these centres: Zarqa Comprehensive Centre for Special Education; Al Manar Centre for Intellectual Development, Russeifeh; Hiteen Centre for Early Detection of Disabilities and Community Rehabilitation, Russeifeh; and, Institute for Family and Child Care (Noor Al Hussein Foundation).¹²

An Early Intervention Unit was opened in the Zarqa Comprehensive Centre in April 2019 and has provided services to 30 children from Zarqa. The Centre offers individual sessions and is able to offer four sessions simultaneously where each session is done with a specialist according to the evaluation given to the child.¹³

Regarding the budget of these centres, the Ministry of Social Development confirmed that there is no special budget allocated to support early intervention centres currently, but rather there are plans to do so. The Ministry of Social Development is working in this regard with the UNICEF and Handicap International (HI), stressing that failure to institutionalise early intervention in Jordan may lead to the end of early intervention services as they depend on support from organisations in the event that this support stops.¹⁴

6.1.2 Early intervention programmes in Jordan

Jordan adopts two early intervention programmes: the first is the "Portage" programme, which is a comprehensive programme; and the "Visa" programme, which specialises in visual impairment. In addition to these programmes, support services such as occupational therapy and physical therapy are also provided.

These programmes are considered evolutionary developmental programmes and follow a special method in evaluating children's skills and building programmes and plans based on the results of that evaluation. The "Portage" programme is intended for all children including those at risk, whereas, the "Visa" programme is directed towards the visually impaired and blind. The Visa Programme also includes programmes on sensory training, residual vision and mobility training.¹⁵

¹² Interview with Dr. Soha Tabal (Specialist in Early Childhood Intervention and Special Education) September 30, 2020.

¹³ Interview with Karima Al Rifai, the director of Zarqa Comprehensive Centre. September 14, 2020.

¹⁴ Interview with Khalifa Sherida, Director of the Directorate of Persons with Disabilities Affairs at the Ministry of Social Development September 14, 2020.

¹⁵ Interview with Dr. Soha Tabal (Specialist in Early Childhood Intervention and Special Education) September 30, 2020.

6.1.3 Providing early intervention services in Jordan

During the research process, researchers were able to identify the mechanism for evaluating cases that provide them with early intervention services, and the process was as follows:

Initially, the child is placed in a special room for evaluation with the presence of their parents and specialised persons such as a physical therapist, special education teacher and, a speech and language therapist to observe the child's performance without any guidance from them and then they determine the child's need and level in consultation with the director of the centre.

The early intervention programme analyses the child's daily routine by working on the goals that the child achieves during their day, whether they are independent, cognitive, or social goals. A plan is also developed that fits with that child's routine in their environment, whether that child is in a working or a non-working environment.

6.1.4 Early intervention for people with visual and mild mental impairments

Persons with visual impairment

While the Ministry of Social Development insists that visual or auditory impairments are not disabilities that require early intervention programmes,¹⁶ Dr. Soha Tabal, a specialist in early childhood intervention and special education disagreed, stressing the importance of early intervention for all impairments. She added that the study of inclusive education in kindergartens confirmed the need to pay more attention to the generalisation of early intervention and inclusion programmes in kindergartens for children with auditory and visual impairments, given that they are the least enrolled groups in inclusive education. She also stated that the "Visa" programme is vital for people with visual impairment which is implemented in Al-Dhiya Society for the Blind in Amman only.

Regarding the knowledge of early intervention centres for the visually impaired, Dr Karima Al Rifai stated that - up until she sat for this interview - the Zarqa Comprehensive Centre has not consulted on any case of people with visual impairment.¹⁷ This is an indication that parents who have children with disabilities are not aware of the measures that should be taken to access the services provided by the centres and the inability of the Ministry of Social Development to reach families of children that suffer from visual impairments. This lack of knowledge of early intervention centres for the visually impaired was confirmed when a group of mothers were asked whether they knew about the existence of centres that provide early intervention services for the blind in Zarqa, but rather they knew of the (Ummahat Al Nour) Association for the Integration of the Blind in Tabarbour, Amman¹⁸ - and they could not reach it as it is far.

¹⁶ Interview with Khalifa Sherida, Director of the Directorate of Persons with Disabilities Affairs at the Ministry of Social Development September 14, 2020.

¹⁷ Interview with Karima Al Rifai, the director of Zarqa Comprehensive Centre. September 14, 2020.

¹⁸ A focus group with ten mothers with children with multiple impairments, ages ranging from one to 32. September 30, 2020.

In this regard, Dr. Karima Al-Rifai, Director of the Zarqa Comprehensive Centre, says that the centre can provide transport services for children with impairments who need early intervention services, but for a fee. "The service is free for parents, they only have to pay for transportation." The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law that was issued in 2017 stipulates that, "it is necessary to have an administrative staff that includes a driver," but they have not yet determined the role of the driver and whether he will serve the administrative staff or the children who need the early intervention service stipulated in Paragraph (f) of Article 29 of the Persons with Disabilities Law of 2017, which provided for the "provision of physical, psychological and social rehabilitation services in areas close to places of residence for persons with impairments and their parents, and to facilitate their access to these services."

Persons with mental impairment

As for early intervention services for persons with mental impairments, mental impairment centres could be easily found in Zarqa. However, two mothers confirmed when interviewed that their experiences were unsuccessful since their children suffered from multiple impairments (mental and mobility) whose ages ranged from 12 to 30. Additionally, due to the lack of continuity of the programme whose implementation period did not exceed an average of three months instead of four years. Some mothers also said that their children aged 3 to 7 who suffered from multiple impairments (both visual and mental) did not receive any early intervention services due to the fact that their children are visually impaired and were uninformed of any centres that provide visual impairment early intervention services in Zarqa except for the Consultative Centre in Russeifeh, which is a private centre; and al-Mukhlis School in the middle of Zarqa, which is a school for the visually impaired and it is affiliated with the Evangelical Saviour Church, where a child is unable to enrol unless they are five years old.¹⁹

Participation with parents

Providing early intervention services is a concept based on training parents to deal with their children with disabilities and directing them on how to educate and help develop their child. The family and the child need to attend approximately 45 sessions, after which a goal and activity sheet is given to the mother. The child must complete every goal that is on the sheet and a tick is placed next to each goal once it has been achieved. Whilst the process of successful early intervention service provision depends on the parents, the concept of early intervention differs for many of them. Accordingly, this will negatively impact the child's mental health and ability to interact if early intervention is underdeveloped; one of the mothers interviewed stated that early intervention meant that: "the child enters training centres before turning 3 years old." Others said²⁰:

- "Early intervention means integrating children with impairments with normal children. Early intervention means that you are interfering with the condition of a child in (their) early years."
- "It depends on what it is, it is to take care of a child with special needs in (their) early years, and maybe even during pregnancy period?"
- Taking care of a child with special needs from a young age, we start teaching and educating the child at the age of two.

¹⁹ The Department of Statistics / Analytical Report on the General Results of Impairment Ratios (function difficulties) in Jordan

Second: The importance of early intervention programmes for people with visual and mild mental impairments in Zarqa

The importance of providing early intervention programmes for children with impairments from birth until the age of six aids in reducing the gap between them and children without disabilities. This can be attained by providing services that help develop their cognitive, mobility, social and, self-care skills which will consecutively make the child more independent. These services vary between educational, academic, social, and environmental services; additionally, providing support services and physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, special education, and individual and group counselling. Furthermore, dispensing advice that the child and their parents need as this will allow the child to grow up prosperously within their family and community.

The benefits of early intervention are plenty and were addressed in numerous special education books throughout history. Most importantly, it was proven by longitudinal studies that monitored children who enrolled in early intervention programmes over a period of 10 years. These studies have shown the extensive effects these programmes have had on children's social and educational integration and how positively they impacted their development opportunities.²⁰

Thus, rehabilitation services would diminish if intervention is provided at the earliest possible age. This would also in turn reduce the developmental differences between children with impairments and ensure their access and integration in mainstream nurseries and kindergartens.

The importance of early intervention programmes also lies in the fact that specialists work with the children and their families where the family is considered a partner in the implementation of such programmes as they help the specialists implement the bulk of the intervention process. Whereas, the team of specialists develop plans to teach the family how to deal with their child. It is crucial to clarify that the child may not suffer from an impairment but rather, they may suffer from a developmental delay or have a social problem.

Certainly, the positive effects of early intervention programmes are not only on children with impairments, but also on their families to increase their interest in their children and recover early from potential psychological effects, which promotes their contribution to facilitating their children growth and development. Early interventions are important for a child with impairments to grow up well in a healthy environment not isolated and not away from family.

²⁰ Al Qemsh. Mustafa (2014) Special Topics in Special Education. Amman.

Third: The challenges facing the application of early intervention procedures and programmes in Zarqa

There are many challenges that parents and early intervention services providers have encountered, most importantly:

Poor access to early intervention services

It has been noted that the early intervention services provided to persons with disabilities were significantly substandard; starting from the inability of early intervention services providers to reach parents of disabled children, but not ending with the same parents knowing about the centres that provide these services in Zarqa, as eight mothers of children with visual impairment within the focus group studied by the researchers indicated that they were not aware of any early intervention services providers in Zarqa Governorate, and that upon discovering their children's visual impairment, they went to Al-Dhiya Society for the Blind in Amman Governorate.

The Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HCD) responded to the aforementioned issue by stating that training, rehabilitating, or informing parents about the existence of such centres is not among the Council's duties stipulated in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Law No. (20) of 2017.

Incompetent cadres working in early intervention programmes

Some mothers of children with multiple impairments (mental and mobility impairments) indicated that early intervention services were unsuccessful because of the incompetent staff who provided the service to their children and their inefficiency in providing the service. This led to the burden of “experimenting” (learning by trial and error) to teach their children basic skills.

Moreover, early childhood specialist Dr. Soha Tabal confirmed during the interview that one of the problems facing the staff is their training, as the majority of their training is theoretical and only a fraction is practical. She also indicated that early intervention programmes must receive more attention throughout the Kingdom.

Lastly, mothers emphasised that there are problems in these centres' enrolment procedures, as there are many requirements that must be fulfilled before their child can join special education centres, for instance: the mastery of independent skills and the lack of multiple impairments (and that the child must suffer from one impairment), as indicated by the mothers.

The burdens imposed on the parents

The participants unanimously agreed that financial cost incurred by them is high considering the general income of families, from the fees of the private early intervention services centres, to the transportation costs or, the price of assistive devices needed for their children. One of the mothers mentioned that her daughter (who has a visual impairment) needs a magnifying device that costs 1000 Jordanian dinars to help her with reading and they could not afford it. Another mother mentioned that one of the centres asked her for an instalment of 350 Jordanian dinars to enrol her

child, "This will cost as much as someone's salary" she commented. This just goes to show the financial situation of the families and their inability to bear these costs.

Parents also encountered psychological and physical burdens that weighed on them in addition to the high financial cost. Some mothers told their stories of obtaining an early intervention service outside Zarqa Governorate, and said that they had to wait for a long period in one of the centres that provides early intervention services in Amman and Balqa: "I have to leave my house at 7 a.m. to be able to get home at 3 p.m. for my child to attend a 40-minute session. Another one said: "I travel from Sukhna in Zarqa to Salt for the sake of my three children who all have a visual impairment."

It should also be noted that one of the most important challenges that parents faced is the society's judgement, as one of the comments that parents heard was that people in society reject the presence of children with impairments among them and this also creates a great psychological burden for the parents.

7 Options and Alternatives

7.1 Alternatives

First: A general policy on improving the early intervention specialisation curriculum at universities: Working on creating university programmes that specialise in ‘Early Intervention for Children with Special Needs’

Objective: To improve higher education programmes in early intervention for children with special needs that would consequently raise the quality of early intervention services provided in the centres.

Programmes:

- The Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (HCD) should conduct more research on early intervention programmes in various areas of development in the early years of children.
- The Higher Council for the Persons with Disabilities (HCD) and the Ministry of Social Development should work on training specialists on how to use the various early intervention programmes (Portage and Visa) with children with visual impairment to yield the best results.
- The Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities (HCD) and Higher Education should set up university courses that are carefully examined by specialists to yield better results.

Second: General Policy that Guides Parents of Children with Visual and Mild Mental impairments in Zarqa.

Objective: To increase parents’ awareness and form a monitoring committee to follow up on the work of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Development.

Programmes:

- Forming a committee by agreement between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Development to educate parents on the importance of early intervention and the centres that provide this service.
- The Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities (HCD) should conduct an awareness campaign and produce leaflets for parents of children with impairments on the topic of early intervention from the moment the impairment is detected.
- The Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities (HCD) should form a supervisory committee to monitor the staff and services provided in the centres.
- The Ministry of Health, in coordination with the Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities (HCD), should issue a model for the parents to help them detect their child's impairment before it develops and the necessary measures that should be taken.

- The Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities (HCD) should work to increase and activate the participation of families of children with disabilities in the early intervention programmes offered, through:
 - Taking procedural measures to ensure the participation of families in the programmes provided for their children who have impairments.
 - Providing early intervention workers with basic information about the needs of families of children who have impairments.
 - Providing families of children with impairments with adequate information about the nature of special needs, the importance of early intervention and ways to meet these needs.
 - The Ministry of Social Development should standardise comprehensive procedures in detecting impairments in children at an early stage, initially in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, and then should work on developing integration strategies as soon as possible.
 - The Ministry of Social Development and the Higher Council for the Persons with Disabilities (HCD) should be more supportive of families and more flexible in providing the best possible coverage for children with impairments.

Third: General Policy Regarding Allocating a Part of the General Budget Towards Early Intervention programmes and their Staff in Zarqa.

Objective: Allocating part of the budget to develop and modernise early intervention centres and improve the performance of their staff.

Programmes:

- The Ministry of Social Development should study each child's financial condition and allocate a sum of money for the child.
- The Ministry of Social Development should allocate money to develop early intervention programmes.
- The Higher Council (HCD) should allocate a budget for the establishment of early intervention centres that will accommodate the needs of children with disabilities.

8 Analysis of Alternatives

This paper takes into account the following scale, as the importance of the time period required to achieve our vision constitutes 25 per cent, the importance of policy applicability constitutes 35 per cent, and the importance of the financial cost constitutes 40 per cent. Accordingly, we had to analyse each alternative based on the ratios of the standard balance, to obtain the optimal alternative that fits with our main issue in this paper. The analysis is as follows:

Thus, the optimal alternatives that this paper adopts are:

- 1- **Policy Number 2:** A general policy for counselling and guiding the parents of children with visual and mild mental impairments in Zarqa.
- 2- **Policy Number 3:** A general policy on allocating part of the general budget towards early intervention programmes and their staff in Zarqa.

These general policies, in turn, will contribute to improving the level and quality of early intervention services by further widening the scope of early intervention programmes by improving, establishing and opening more centres, implementing more early intervention programmes to suit all disabilities and, working cooperatively with parents of people with disabilities through the guidance and counseling programmes provided to them, and periodic follow-ups which in turn help in evaluating what is being worked on. All of the above will mitigate the effects of all disabilities on the behavioral, developmental, educational, intellectual, social, psychological and economic levels.

Alternative	Timeline	Applicability	Financial cost	
General policies on raising quality of “early intervention” courses/programmes offered at universities	$25\% \times 40\% = 10\%$	$35\% \times 40\% = 10\%$	$40\% \times 40\% = 16\%$	40%
General policy on guiding parents of children with Visual and mild mental impairments in Zarqa	$25\% \times 50\% = 10\%$	$35\% \times 60\% = 21\%$	$40\% \times 80\% = 32\%$	63%
General policy on allocating part of the general budget for early intervention programmes and their staff in Zarqa Governorate	$25\% \times 60\% = 15\%$	$35\% \times 50\% = 17.5\%$	$40\% \times 6.7\% = 24\%$	56.5%

9 References

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