

End-of-mission statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, Mr. Gerard Quinn, on his visit to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Amman, 15 September 2022

**Members of the press,
Ladies and gentlemen,**

Introduction

In my capacity as United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, I conclude today my first official visit to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which took place from 5 to 15 September 2022.

During the past two weeks I, along with my team, have had the opportunity to assess, in a spirit of open dialogue and sincere cooperation, the level of enjoyment of the rights of persons with disabilities, the opportunities they have, and the challenges that remain.

I am grateful to the Government of Jordan for the invitation to visit the country and I extend my heartfelt thanks to those who made my visit possible. I would like to express my particular appreciation to the focal points within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for coordinating my visit. I would also like to thank the United Nations Resident Coordinator, the United Nations Country Team and the United Nations Development Program in Jordan for so effectively supporting my team before and throughout the visit. I benefitted greatly from the opportunity to exchange views with representatives of the diplomatic community, and United Nations agencies here in Amman.

I would like to especially thank all the persons with disabilities and their representative organizations with whom I met, and who took the time to share with me their hopes, challenges, and desires for the future.

I met with a broad range of Jordanians with disabilities living in both urban and rural settings, women and young girls with disabilities from various socio-economic backgrounds, and older persons with disabilities. Their stories of struggle, resilience and success were immensely powerful and indeed inspiring.

A particularly memorable encounter was meeting a young boy in the Karak governorate, who was out of school and working as a shepherd because of his hearing impairment. A UNICEF child protection worker identified him as a protection risk and through a dialogue with his family secured a hearing aid for the boy. He is now in school and aspires to be a musician. His story is testament to the human spirit which always shines when given a chance.

I was also touched and inspired by the many parents of children with disabilities who, through their love and sheer determination, overcame many barriers to ensure their children were able to get a good start in life through an inclusive education. On their shoulders rests the future.

During my visit, I had discussions with numerous senior officials representing different ministries and agencies, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Health, the Jordan Armed Forces and the Hashemite Commission for Disabled Soldiers, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice and the Judicial Council, the Independent Elections Commission, the House of Representatives, the Ministry of Youth, the Jordan Paralympic Committee, the Greater Amman Municipality, and the Public Security Directorate. I thank them all for their openness.

It should be emphasized at the outset there is a long history of interaction between global disability standards and Jordanian policy stretching back to the first UN Decade of persons with disabilities in the

early 1980s. This positive interaction continues with the UN convention the rights of persons and the UN Sustainable Development Goals as the main drivers of change.

Together these instruments press a profound re-set button on disability policy - away from charity and toward justice and rights. Inclusion in all its dimensions is the logical outcome of this switch. I was struck by a recent speech of King Abdullah making exactly the same point and indeed much more eloquently than I.

This shift is particularly important in Jordan whose main asset is its people. Pressing the re-set button means counteracting negative stereotypes, reversing the legacy of the past and creating space for all human talent to flourish. The national aspiration to become a knowledge-based economy presents many opportunities to empower persons with disabilities. Leaving no one behind isn't just a moral imperative - it is vital if Jordan is to grow an economy into which all may contribute and give of themselves as well as benefit from.

Jordan, of course, bears primary responsibility to chart a meaningful and impactful line of change. Third parties including donor countries and agencies also bear some responsibility. Their main challenge is not to substitute for what the Government of Jordan should be doing but to complement it in ways that enhance the prospects of sustainable change.

It is altogether fitting that Jordan will assume co-sponsorship for the third Global Disability Summit to be held in 2025. This is a unique opportunity to showcase developments within Jordan and perhaps to highlight the regional dimension to change. Certainly, Jordan is a good example for others in the region to emulate.

What follows is my impression of the process of change in Jordan followed by some observations on some key policy challenges.

A: The Process of Change

Committing to a policy re-set and embedding a positive dynamic of change is what matters most.

If the past is prologue then there is ample reason for hope.

Jordan was one of the first States to come to the table at the start of the process that resulted in the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Jordan was also one of the first States to sign and then ratify the CRPD. Jordan has recently ratified the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled. Jordan's role in supporting the Mine Ban Treaty is well known and deeply appreciated. In keeping with this, I would encourage Jordan to ratify the Optional Protocol to the CRPD at the earliest opportunity.

I note that the Jordanian Constitution has been recently amended to better account for persons with disabilities within a human rights frame. It now includes a specific prohibition against discrimination on the basis of disability. These headline changes send powerful signals about the culture shift and can be built upon. The CRPD itself has been incorporated into Jordanian law. I was unable to determine whether there have been constitutional or other judicial decisions based on it.

I very much welcome the adoption of Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2017. This is a pioneering piece of legislation for Jordan and indeed for the region. The explicit prohibition of discrimination on the basis of disability in the legislation together with the incorporation of the duty to provide 'reasonable accommodation' is especially welcome.

This concept - which is a key driver of change - bears further development and clarification. The Government might consider assisting the process of change by developing clear and detailed guidance on 'reasonable accommodation' which would be of inestimable worth to employers and educational authorities

as well as others. There is no lack of international guidance which can be tailored to Jordanian circumstances.

Given that the UN CRPD applies to all persons within any particular jurisdiction, consideration might also be given to expanding the protective embrace of the law to include all persons with disabilities in Jordan. This would extend some minimal level of legal protection to refugees with disabilities.

Law - even good law - may not sink deep roots unless its underlying predicates - rights -not charity - is constantly reinforced. One of the more neglected parts of the UN CRPD - Article 8 - explicitly calls for such campaigns on the part of Governments' to sensitize the population at large to the rights of persons with disabilities.

On this point, I heard often and directly from persons with disabilities on how stigma and bias keep them at home, out of school and unemployed and isolated from their communities. In particular, youth with disabilities across Jordan shared with me how the negative perception of disability impacted them and their families. A young girl in the South with a limb impairment faces constant bullying on the way to school.

These public attitudes - unless addressed - creates a self-fulfilling cycle of exclusion. This is palpably to everyone's disadvantage and especially if the economy and society is to grow based in inclusion.

I also note the inclusion of accessibility standards in the National Building Law (No. 7 of 1993). I welcome the fatwa issued in Decision No. 194-02 of 2014 and adopted by the Jordanian Department for the Rendering of Formal Islamic Law Opinions, prohibiting the forced sterilization of girls with disabilities.

The Institutional Architecture for Change

Jordan embarked on a process of change soon after ratification of the CRPD. In 2007, it established the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities which is now styled the Higher Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Higher Council).

The Higher Council serves as a policy lead and coordination mechanism. In a way it acts as a transmission belt allowing the fresh breeze of a human rights-based approach to disability into internal law and policy debates. It performs a vital role for the State in giving tangible expression to the rights-based approach. Its blueprints for change command widespread attention. In keeping with international practice, it might also make sense to complement this engine of policy ideas with a clear focal point embedded at the highest political level and possibly in the Prime Minister's Office. In this way ownership of the key ideas which the Higher Council develops can be more evenly embedded thus enhancing the prospects of change,

I note the engagement of the Higher Council with organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs). Doubtless, the changed policy landscape presents many opportunities and challenges for OPDs. It changes the centre of gravity of conversations which should now focus on understanding the tangible meaning of the rights-based and inclusion approach. In a way this calls for new skills on the part of OPDs - to co-create blueprints and solutions for change.

One piece of the puzzle seemingly absent in Jordan is the input of universities to contribute to the process of change. Some thought should be given to teaching and research on disability human rights at Jordanian universities which would work collaboratively with civil society to critique law and policy and to make practical suggestions for change. Power and voice also need ideas and new thinking to succeed. Donors might be particularly attentive to the capacity needs of OPDs and grassroots advocacy to ensure they can take full advantage of the opportunities presented by the new policy landscape.

Jordan has not yet designated or established a framework containing one or more independent mechanisms to monitor its implementation of the CRPD. This gap was already noted by the CRPD Committee. I urge

the Government to create such a framework to complement the important work being undertaken by the Higher Council.

The Jordanian Parliament seems to be very attentive to the rights of persons with disabilities. This is to be greatly welcomed. Some countries are now putting in place Joint Committees on the UN CRPD. Some thought might be given to the creation of such a Committee by the Parliament as a way of ensuring a steady focus on ways and means of giving practical effect to the convention in Jordanian law and policy.

Data collection as a Precondition for Rational Policy Choices

Data is not an end in itself - it is a vital precondition for rational policy making. The current data on disability suggests a population of persons with disabilities of some 11.2% according to the 2015 national census. This is likely an underestimation given estimates of at least 15% disability prevalence by the World Health Organization.

I welcome and support calls to improve data and data collection on disability. Of particular importance is utilization and understanding that questions formulated and tested by the Washington Group on Disability Statistics, including the short set and the WG/UNICEF Child Functioning Module are in use in Jordan. These tools are essential in order to monitor the implementation of the CRPD and the SDGs with international comparability.

Key information gaps remain, including the number of refugees with disabilities for example. Many of the Government ministries we spoke to also noted the lack of disability data as a key challenge to effective implementation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in everything from education to labor.

However, short of more accurate data, programs and initiatives should not be held back. They can and should move forward under the assumption that 15% of the population is an individual with a disability and therefore universal design and accessibility need to be included in all projects, regardless of the unavailability of data. This is also a major concern among humanitarian organizations.

B: Some Key Policy Domains and Challenges.

Inclusion is not an abstract idea - it has to work itself pure in practical policy domains like education. It is always a work in progress. The following are my impressions of the march of the idea in some key policy domains.

Legal Capacity – Personhood

Personhood is a bedrock of the UN CRPD. This essentially means restoring voice, choice and control to persons with disabilities over their own lives - human subjects and not objects. Reform here is both practically and symbolically important.

In Jordan, persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities may still be denied their legal capacity to make decisions for themselves. This is the effect of the Personal Status Law. I was unable to discover how many persons are directly affected.

This has tangible impacts across a broad range of domains including the right to vote. This situation undercuts the excellent work being undertaken by the Higher Council and the Independent Election Commission to advance the political rights of persons with disabilities and to combat persistent stigma, especially in relation to persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities. This gap was already highlighted by the CRPD Committee and is a suggested priority for reform.

This is a sensitive area of law reform in Jordan given the dual nature of the legal system. Nevertheless, I am optimistic that change can happen to respect the autonomy and personhood of persons with disabilities.

There is certainly no lack of models of reform around the world that could be appropriately considered in Jordan.

Living independently and Being Included in the Community

Every human being needs a place they can call home - a place that reflects and holds their personhood and connects them to the community.

I especially welcome the move to deinstitutionalize persons with disabilities and the accompanying strategy to achieve this goal in Jordan. I do see tangible progress in this direction. Long term, this requires changes in how services are designed and delivered to make community living a viable option. Jordan can learn from many countries who have gone down this path.

Many support services and programmes are run by non-profit organizations, with limited funding and guidance from the national government. Consequently, persons with disabilities have limited access to different forms of support (including income support, home support, and respite centers) and experience long waiting times, often several years. While some pilot projects have shown the potential to transform service provision (e.g., the initiatives to provide personalized direct funding), the overall identification, systematization and scaling-up of such initiatives remain a challenge. Gaps in social protection and family support mechanisms only perpetuate cycles of poverty and exclusion. This is a work in progress but the adoption of the Strategy is a good start which needs continued impetus.

The recent recommendation of the Public Sector Service Commission that residential institutions be placed under the Ministry of Health rather than the Ministry of Social Development is a major step backwards that I sincerely hope will be re-considered: It seems obvious but bears repeating that the vast majority of persons with disabilities are not sick.

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is the key to unlocking human potential. The future success of Jordan literally depends on it.

As highlighted in the Strategy on Inclusive Education, the 2015 census indicated that 79% of persons with disabilities do not receive any form of education. Those who are in school are often in segregated schools or in regular schools without the support they require to succeed. We heard from many parents that their school age children with disabilities were invariably excluded on the basis of being “too disabled.”

I am therefore pleased to find that Inclusive Education is prioritized, with reforms in law and policy to that end. However, I am concerned that progress towards a fully inclusive education system is at an early stage and seems not to be moving as quickly as it might.

I heard and saw the numerous barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from receiving a quality education. For instance, I met two Jordanian girls from the Southern Valley who had to share a single hearing aid which seriously impacted their equal access to school. I was informed that many children with disabilities are still being taught in segregated classrooms or are being rejected for inclusion in regular schools.

I received worrisome reports that children with disabilities in refugee camps are denied access to an education and are subjected to serious bullying in and on the way to school. Schools being run by UNWRA and UNHCR and their partners inside refugee camps are highly limited in their ability to appropriately cater to the needs of students with disabilities.

On the important issue of higher education, I am delighted to find that there is a move to improve accessibility for students with disabilities in universities. Work to better equip higher education in teaching

Jordanian sign language is underway in a partnership with Gallaudet University, the only university in the world devoted to educating Deaf persons. Efforts to sweep away exclusionary policies in relation to accessing the course of one's own choosing are excellent signs of progress. I am delighted to find that persons with disabilities are having greater access to courses such as medical education that were previously closed to them. Undertaking a comprehensive assessment of the accessibility of higher education as well as vocational training to persons with disabilities is a suggested next step.

Inclusive Employment

Inclusive employment is the key to personal freedom and empowerment for people and particularly for persons with disabilities.

I was privileged to have the opportunity to meet a highly enterprising factory owner who was employing persons with disabilities throughout his operation. By making the work environment accessible and providing reasonable accommodations, the factory not only exceeds the quota for employees with disabilities but is financially successful. I was heartened by this enterprising business owner whose example can and should be replicated across the private sector.

His experience shows what is possible. Employers' federations and networks might be encouraged to set up a peer-to-peer network to learn about these success stories and share good practices. Government has a role to play in giving tangible advice to employers on how to accommodate workers with disabilities. A broader range of policy tools might be used to generate a more inclusive labour market - such as tax credits for investments to make factory premises accessible. Public procurement law might be used to give an added advantage to enterprises that are genuinely inclusive.

Accessibility to the built and electronic environment

Having rights to enter a space is one thing - being enabled to do so is quite another.

I have also noted significant disparities in the areas of accessibility. A recurring theme during my visit was the difficulty that persons with physical disabilities and older persons persistently face in accessing transport that is accessible and affordable. I saw the impact this is having on access to school, medicine, health care and employment. The new state-of-the-art bus terminal in Amman shows what is possible. Such sterling efforts should be progressively brought to scale.

With regard to access to information and communication, the provision of sign language interpretation services remains very limited, including access to basic services. This speaks to the role of higher education in training, not only for sign language interpreters but for specialists that are needed to serve all people, including persons with disabilities. I am delighted to find that several universities in the northern part of the country are focusing on making higher education more accessible. Work has also been done in several universities, including the University of Jordan, to sweep away exclusionary policies in relation to accessing the course of one's own choosing. I am delighted to find that persons with disabilities are having greater access to courses such as medical education that were previously closed to them. I encourage a comprehensive assessment of the accessibility of higher education to persons with disabilities and the establishment of a coherent plan for barrier removal.

I was not able to explore accessibility to the electronic environment (e.g., web accessibility) but strongly suggest this is one of the keys to the development of a knowledge-based economy of benefit to all.

Primary Health Care Services and Access to Rehabilitation

Addressing the accessibility of the primary health care system, specialist services along with rehabilitation and mental health supports is a critical precondition to full inclusion in society for persons with disabilities.

There is clear evidence that persons with disabilities - and particularly refugees with disabilities and Jordanians who experience extreme poverty - have a high incidence of non-communicable diseases often compounding and aggravating disability.

Especially wrenching was the situation of a young father whose two children were born in Za'atari camp with an especially serious eye condition requiring surgery with only the dimmest prospects for access to specialist care. And the absence of any respite care at all for caregivers of refugees with disabilities, whether for refugees inside camps or living in urban areas, strongly correlates with extreme poverty, the onset of non-communicable diseases and psychosocial disability for these carers.

The Rehabilitation Strategy embraces the commitments of the CRPD, but the system for early identification of disability is inadequate to put in place the supports needed and to do so early on. The result is that children with disabilities are excluded from school altogether or denied the support they need and face lifelong poverty in many instances.

The Future of Mental Health Care - from Coercion to Community Based Support

The world is moving decisively away from coercive measures toward community-based services in the mental health field.

I very much welcome those efforts of mental health clinics I visited to serve the needs of persons with psychosocial and mental health concerns. Ensuring that community-based mental health responses embracing a biopsychosocial model are brought to scale is vital, as is ensuring that all healthcare interventions are provided on the basis of free and informed consent. Italy's model for reform should receive attention at the highest level of government and might be adapted to the circumstances here.

I met during my visit a number of highly dedicated, well-trained mental health workers, both those working in national hospitals as well as those working in community mental health centers and integrated into health centers in primary health care facilities, including those in refugee camps. The reality is that the mental health system is unable to meet current needs of the population and is stretched to the limit in those communities hosting refugees.

The intersection of mental disability, gender, poverty, and status is a particularly harsh one. I met a refugee whose mental and physical health deteriorated after her abusive husband left the family and who is now totally reliant on her son for her very intensive support needs. This single caregiver is the only one in the household not experiencing intensive mental disability. His only recourse on leaving the home to obtain food or other essentials is to chain his three seriously ill brothers in a locked room to prevent them running out of the house. The human cost of unmet access to mental health services for caregivers is inestimable.

There is a need for independent monitoring of mental health facilities and institutions. I would suggest the establishment of independent monitoring mechanisms for centers of deprivation of liberty, including hospitals and institutions.

I am also deeply concerned about the legislation in place that criminalizes and sanctions suicide attempts where such an attempt occurs in a public space. Instead of providing quality mental health supports, persons who attempt suicide in public are, on their second attempt, subject to penalties and incarcerated in prison. Criminalization is not the appropriate response in this circumstance. Such legislation needs to be repealed to bring the law into compliance with the CRPD.

Access to Justice for Persons with Disabilities

I learned during my visit about measures being taken to meet the obligation to provide procedural accommodation to persons with disabilities in legal proceedings, as established in Article 13 of the CRPD among other articles. I was unable to determine to what extent persons with disabilities are accessing the legal system in order to vindicate their rights. Better tracking of the emergence of disability case law together with ensuring the teaching of disability law in law schools will be the next step in advancing access to justice.

I note the promising establishment of an Equal Opportunities Committee under the 2017 Law. The legislation does not clarify whether remedies are available to those who file complaints before the Committee and unfortunately, complaints are only, at this juncture, accepted for cases cornering employment discrimination. Also unclear is whether organizations of persons with disabilities are aware of and providing legal assistance to claimants under this mechanism. Likewise, it is unclear whether legal assistance centers and lawyers more generally are aware of the process and making use of it. Anecdotal evidence suggests that persons with disabilities who are precariously employed are reluctant to pursue claims of discrimination for fear of victimisation. I suggest drawing on the deep practice of similar mechanisms established around the world in the further development of this potentially important mechanism.

Political participation of persons with disabilities

Politics is how the public interest is shaped. Not having effective access to it disorerts the process and perpetuates invisibility.

In relation to participation in decision-making processes, I was pleased to learn that Jordan is continuing to address the participation of persons with disabilities and the barriers they face in having their voice heard. Following ratification of the CRPD, Jordan moved to change its policy in regard to assisted voting to better align with the CRPD. Now, a person of one's own choosing can provide assistance to a voter with a disability. Here it should be underscored that efforts by the Independent Election Commission to employ persons with disabilities are vital in this ongoing effort and should be expedited.

While 23 accessible model voting centers are available the vast majority of polling centers have minimal accessibility measures in place, many in schools. Clearly, progress in making educational facilities accessible will also impact on the accessibility of polling stations.

Such model centres - though hugely welcome - should be clearly branded as a transitional arrangement and an insistent focus should be placed on 'reasonable accommodation' of those voters who do not have access.

Recent amendments to the legislation on political parties has resulted in a requirement for new political parties to include, in their founding, a person with a disability. It is my hope that this will result in meaningful change within political parties to make their party platforms inclusive of persons with disabilities and that tokenism will be avoided.

Poverty and Disability

The well-known link between poverty and disability is not inevitable. The fatalistic cycle can be broken. The future of social protection is to meet basic needs and in a way that connects people to their communities and gives them a life.

Jordanians living in rural areas may struggle to obtain access to the most basic products – batteries for hearing aids are unobtainable outside Amman. We met two sisters in a remote area who must share their

one hearing aid (when it has batteries) and have to alternate days of attending classes, thus causing serious interruptions in their schooling. And for Jordanians living in poverty in the Southern Jordan Valley, they face serious obstacles in accessing prosthetics. Community Based Organisations (CBOs) operating in these areas are stretched and require training and support in order to address the many unmet needs of their beneficiaries.

Refugees with Disabilities

Given my interest in the impact of armed conflict on persons with disabilities and the significant risks they face, I met with refugees hosted in Jordan in both urban and rural camps. All of humanity owes a great debt to Jordan.

The philosophy of inclusion also applies to refugees with disabilities. I deeply appreciated the opportunity to speak with refugees with disabilities and their families, to hear their stories, to know their dreams and to understand their unique situations and the barriers they experience. I visited the Jerash Palestinian Refugee Camp and the Za'atari Syrian Refugee Camp and also met with refugees with disabilities living in the Sweileh district. It is clear that Jordan is being asked to and is undertaking a monumental task.

I recognize the monumental efforts being made to ensure the protection of high risk groups like persons with disabilities but also see the numerous barriers they face in accessing healthcare, rehabilitation, education, and employment.

The intersectionality and relationship between disability, poverty, gender, and societal status (including refugee status) is all too clear. Jerash Camp highlighted for me the significant role that intergenerational poverty and disability plays for the most at-risk refugee families, including many who may have 2, 3 or more family members with disabilities and intensive support needs.

I also met with the many service providers, local and international, including UNWRA, who are working tirelessly to serve refugees with disabilities. The challenge to ensure that these especially at-risk individuals and their families are not left behind is immense. We heard their voices and identified numerous opportunities to make their lives better that are simple and straightforward. I will reflect further on that during the course of my remarks.

The CRPD calls to attention the need for the extra costs of disability to be prioritized in order to reach a baseline of human dignity, even in dire circumstances. I found the differential access of refugees with disabilities based on their status and nationality to be striking. I met a 43-year old Sudanese refugee who stated that even with the support of UNHCR he is not able to afford his high medical costs associated with his disability because he was unable to obtain health insurance. Within Jerash camp, a family had to prioritize using their limited financial assistance to send their one child to school, and thereby foregoing medication and treatment for their two adult children with disabilities.

A Syrian refugee, who has been disabled since 1986, summed up the economic prospects for refugees by saying: "they say teach a man to fish, but persons with disabilities have learned to fish but there is no sea nearby." Providing access to health insurance and employment equally across all the refugee population is the sensible solution.

I recognize the immense strain placed on Jordan in regard to the number of refugees the country is hosting, and the fact that donor organizations and States continue to provide humanitarian aid, but that support is starting to wane. Significant gaps remain to reach the most at-risk population of refugees with disabilities and their families. During a focus group discussion at Za'atari camp, it became excruciatingly clear that the assistance provided is insufficient to meet the needs of persons with disabilities and particularly those with additional support needs.

As donor fatigue sets in, and aid organizations move to the next conflict, refugees with disabilities increasingly struggle to have access to the most basic of necessities. The very few international organizations focused on providing basic assistive devices to persons with disabilities in Za'atari Refugee Camp are gone. The wait for much needed assistive devices – hearing aids, prosthetics and orthotics, wheelchairs, walkers, among other WHO listed essential assistive products – is interminable. Even when they are obtained, they are not replaced and are of poor quality notwithstanding best efforts on the part of the few organizations remaining and the outstanding camp workshops creating assistive devices from recycled metal. Obtaining the resources needed to obtain such assistive products outside the camps is all but impossible.

While mainstreaming disability is essential in humanitarian action, without also targeted programming for refugees with disabilities, the story of a young man with an intellectual disability who was unable to get an education because the camp school could not accommodate his disability will grow ever more common. Aid organizations and donors must endeavor to use the twin-track approach in humanitarian action—not merely mainstreaming—to ensure that no matter type or degree of disability there will be programming to address the need.

Targeting programming is needed, for instance to provide additional space or a larger caravan in a camp setting, the provision of WHO Priority Assistive Products list to those who need them, refrigeration for essential medications, or quick access to a battery for a hearing aid. The lack of access to personal hygiene products, mattress protectors, bed pads among other essentials for persons with disabilities has left refugees with disabilities in an unacceptable situation of indignity and puts their health at serious risk. I would encourage donors and humanitarian aid organizations to utilize the guidance provided by the Interagency Standing Committee Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities within Humanitarian Action. While some efforts have been made to address coordination in humanitarian action for support to persons with disabilities and older persons, there is an urgent need to better prioritize assistance programs to reduce duplication, avoid overly broad initiatives that will not sufficiently meet the needs of refugees with disabilities, and share lessons learned.

Conclusions

Jordan has clearly set itself down the path of inclusion based on the rights of persons with disabilities. It is preeminent in the region and deserves the wholesome support of the international community. The underlying predicates of this culture shift - rights not charity - need to be continually reinforced.

Recent legislation and policy strategies are all trending in the right direction. Implementation remains a key challenge.

The institutional architecture for change - especially the Higher Council for Persons with Disabilities - is strong. OPDs deserve support in raising their capacities to take advantage of the new policy landscape and to co-create blueprints for change. Universities need to be encouraged to become active participants in the process of change and to do so in close collaboration with civil society.

The main policy challenges across a broad range of fields reflect an uneven application of the philosophy of inclusion. They can be remedied. More attention might be paid to how similarly situated countries are nevertheless managing to push forward and innovate.

Donors have a particular responsibility to adopt a clear theory of change, to identify investments that will lead to systemic as well as sustainable change and to coordinate their joint efforts.

Jordan deserves the thanks of all humanity for its reception of refugees with disabilities. Leaving no one behind has to mean extending the benefits of inclusion to refugees with disabilities. That is a joint responsibility with the international community.

