



Disability in North Africa

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Question

What are people with disabilities' experiences of inclusion and marginalisation in North Africa, and has this had an impact on regional/national economies and wider prosperity?

Contents

1. Overview
2. Algeria
3. Egypt
4. Libya
5. Morocco
6. Tunisia
7. References

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1. Overview

While there is not a clear picture of disability in North Africa, the available evidence suggests that people with disabilities are doing less well in comparison to people without disabilities as a result of factors including marginalisation, stigma, lack of awareness of disability prevalence, lack of comprehensive protection and enforcement of the rights of people with disabilities, and inaccessible environments, services and workplaces. Such exclusion has costs for wider society and the lives of people with disabilities. This rapid review provides an overview the experiences of people with disabilities in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. Given the time limitations and the state of the evidence it cannot be said to provide a comprehensive picture of the situation but does highlight the major issues arising from recent English language¹ literature published on the topic.

There is no clear or reliable data on disability prevalence² in North Africa. According to the United Nations' Economic and Social Commission of Western Asia (ESCWA), the disability prevalence rates reported by countries in the MENA region are skewed by under-reporting and narrow definitions of disability (Sida, 2014, p. 1). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that persons with disabilities include 'those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (UNCRPD, 2006). It should be noted that is not clear in many of the papers referenced whether mental disability refers to people with intellectual disabilities or to people with mental health conditions.

There does not seem to be much first hand research being carried out on disability in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia and it is not always clear what evidence is being used in the available literature. Most of the available literature is grey literature rather than academic papers. Similar levels of information do not appear to be available for each country and there are numerous evidence gaps across almost all areas of people with disabilities' experiences of inclusion and marginalisation.

Almost no research has been carried out into the impact of the exclusion of people with disabilities in North Africa on regional/national economies and wider prosperity, although the research which has been carried out has indicated that it has cost Morocco approximately 2% of its GDP and reduced the life expectancy of people with disabilities by 20 years in Morocco and 18 in Tunisia. Companies which have included people with disabilities in Egypt have benefited from an effective, productive, and committed workforce. International research supports these findings, concluding that there is a large, macroeconomic cost of excluding people with disabilities from the workforce (HI, 2016d, p. 11). The exclusion of people with disabilities involves losses in productivity and human potential, which has economic costs for societies (Rohwerder, 2015, p. 30). Buckup (2009, p. 51) notes that 'people with disabilities are less productive not because they are "disabled" but because they live and work in environments that are "disabling"'.

¹ The report was unable to look at the available literature on French and Arabic.

² For more information on the issues related to disability prevalence more generally, including issues with disability measurement, please see Thompson S. (2017). *Disability prevalence and trends*. K4D Helpdesk Report. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies. <http://www.gsdrc.org/publications/disability-prevalenceand-trends/>

Further research with people with different types of disabilities is needed to more fully understand the experiences of people with disabilities living in Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia, the barriers and challenges they face, what is being done to include them, and the impact of exclusion on them and wider society.

The main findings include:

Algeria

- **Prevalence:** Disability prevalence is estimated to be 5.5%, with concerns over underreporting of disability.
- **Legislation:** Algeria has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). While Algerian law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities it is not effectively enforced.
- **Attitudes:** People with disabilities face widespread social discrimination.
- **Education:** Few children with disabilities attend school past secondary level and most are educated in segregated rather than inclusive schools.
- **Employment:** There is a 1% quota for people with disabilities but few businesses abide by the law. People with disabilities have been paid less for doing the same work as their non-disabled colleagues.
- **Social assistance:** The government provides social assistance to people with disabilities with a disability card, runs centres supporting people with disabilities, and covers expenses relating to reasonable accommodation and transportation for people with disabilities within education and vocational training facilities.
- **Infrastructure:** Many government buildings are inaccessible.
- **Political participation:** Voting centres are often inaccessible.
- **Organisations working on disability inclusion:** Disabled peoples organisations (DPOs) and national and international partners provide support to advance the rights of people with disabilities.

Egypt

- **Prevalence:** Estimates of disability prevalence range from about 12% to as low as 0.7%, although the lower figure is thought to be unrealistic due to questionable data collection methods.
- **Legislation:** Egypt has ratified the UNCRPD. While the rights of persons with disabilities are guaranteed in the constitution, laws prohibiting discriminations in various areas of life do not exist or have not been implemented.
- **Attitudes:** There is shame, stigma and prejudice around disability in Egypt, preventing the full inclusion of people with disabilities.
- **Healthcare:** Health and rehabilitation services for children and adults with disabilities are lacking, of poor quality, and do not meet all their needs.
- **Education:** Children with disabilities struggle to access education, leading to high illiteracy rates (61% for males and 70% for females), and creating barriers to participation in higher education. Other barriers to education include inaccessible environments, inaccessible course material, lack of assistive technologies, and attitudinal barriers.
- **Employment:** The employment rate of people with disabilities is reported to be half that of the non-disabled population and they may face worse treatment at work. Barriers to employment include negative attitudes around disability; lack of relevant skills as a result of exclusion from education and/or professional training; and inaccessible working

environments and transportation to work. There is a 5% quota for people with disabilities but it is not enforced.

- Companies have partnered with civil society organisations to employ people with disabilities, and have seen that the return on the investment of time and resources is an effective, productive, and committed workforce.
- **Social assistance:** People with disabilities receive special subsidies on assistive products and services.
- **Transport:** Public buses are free to people with disabilities but are not wheelchair accessible.
- **Political participation:** The House of Representatives must include nine persons with disabilities and political representation has helped raise interest in disability issues.
- **Organisations working on disability inclusion:** DPOs and national and international organisations are working to enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities.

Libya

- **Prevalence:** Estimates of disability prevalence range from 2.9% to 14.3%. A third of disabilities were suggested to be linked to conflict related injuries.
- **Legislation:** Libya has only recently ratified the UNCRPD (13/2/18). There are provisions for “protection” of people with disabilities in the Constitutional Declaration but it does not explicitly prohibit discrimination.
- **Attitudes:** People with disabilities are subject to negative stereotypes and there is severe social stigma around mental illness.
- **Healthcare:** Service provision for people with disabilities is largely inadequate, including as a result of the conflict.
- **Education:** 54.8% of females with disabilities are illiterate compared to 28.8% of males and boys with disabilities are more likely to go to school than girls with disabilities.
- **Employment:** People with disabilities are economically disadvantaged.
- **Social assistance:** People with disabilities are entitled to pensions, entitlements and access to free treatment in the government rehabilitation centres, especially if their disabilities resulted from the 2011 conflict.
- **Infrastructure:** Few public facilities and communications are accessible.
- **Political participation:** DPOs have worked on the constitution and electoral processes.
- **Media:** People with disabilities are largely absent from media reporting but efforts have been made to train them to advocate for the equality of people with disabilities.
- **Organisations working on disability inclusion:** DPOs are demanding measures to improve the rights of persons with disabilities.

Morocco

- **Prevalence:** Estimates of disability prevalence range from 5.1% to 6.8%.
- **Legislation:** Morocco has ratified the UNCRPD. While the law goes some way to preventing discrimination against people with disabilities, it falls short in some areas and has not been effectively enforced or implemented.
- **Attitudes:** Stigma and negative perceptions are an issue for people with disabilities.
- **Age and gender:** Women with disabilities experience multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination. There are reports of abuse and abandonment of children with disabilities.
- **Healthcare:** 60% of people with disabilities struggle to access health services as a result of lack of accessible transport and health services.

- **Education:** 66.5% of people with disabilities have never been to school and most children with disabilities are in segregated special education. Barriers to education include inaccessible transport and schools, lack of teachers trained in inclusive education, and negative societal attitudes.
- **Employment:** People with disabilities were three times less likely to be employed due to discrimination against people with disabilities and few efforts to provide reasonable accommodation. There is a 7% quota for people with disabilities in public service but it has not been met.
- Lost income as a result of the exclusion of people with disabilities has been estimated to result in national-level losses of approximately 2% of the country's GDP.
- **Poverty:** People with disabilities face a higher level and intensity of multidimensional poverty, with deprivation in employment the leading contributor to poverty. Women with disabilities were poorer than men with disabilities. Social exclusion results in a reduction in average life expectancy of 20 years for people with disabilities.
- **Social assistance:** Some aid is provided to people with disabilities. There are high levels of institutionalisation and a lack of community support services.
- **Infrastructure:** Many buildings and transport are inaccessible.
- **Political participation:** 75.5% of polling stations were not easily accessible, although efforts are being made to increase access.
- **Access to justice:** Barriers to justice include lack of accessibility and substantive procedural accommodations.
- **Organisations working on disability inclusion:** DPOs and organisations are working to promote the rights of people with disabilities.

Tunisia

- **Prevalence:** Estimates of disability prevalence range from 2.15% to 16.3%.
- **Legislation:** Tunisia has ratified the UNCRPD and the law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities.
- **Attitudes:** Stigma and discriminatory attitudes restrict people with disabilities' social participation.
- **Education:** The government provides segregated education for children with disabilities.
- **Employment:** People with disabilities were three times less likely to be employed and earned a 40% lower income than people without disabilities. There is a 2% quota for people with disabilities but it is not widely enforced.
- **Poverty:** People with disabilities face a higher level and intensity of multidimensional poverty, with deprivation in employment the leading contributor to poverty. Women with disabilities were poorer than men with disabilities. Social exclusion results in a reduction in average life expectancy of 18 years for people with disabilities.
- **Social assistance:** The government provides a disability card offering a range of benefits but people with intellectual disabilities and people with mental health conditions have limited access to the card.
- **Infrastructure:** There is quite a comprehensive accessibility strategy but more of a focus on specialised solutions than ensuring full accessibility.
- **Political participation:** People with disabilities have struggled to participate in political processes due to lack of accessibility and awareness.
- **Organisations working on disability inclusion:** Organisations are advocating for the rights and welfare of people with disabilities.

2. Algeria

Prevalence

Disability prevalence in Algeria is estimated to be 5.5%, or 1,088,000 to 1,605,160 people with disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 44). There are concerns however about underreporting of disability, particularly of people with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 44).

Legislation and policy

Algeria ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2009 and launched a National Disability Survey in 2011 as the basis for a new bill (HI, 2016c, p. 1). Algerian law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or the provision of other state services, although the government has not effectively enforced these provisions (USDS, 2017, p. 35). The law also obliges the state to 'promote the professional integration of people with disabilities, including equal access to vocational training programs, and inclusion of people with disabilities in job creation plans' (HI, 2016d, p. 45).

Attitudes

People with disabilities in Algeria face widespread social discrimination (USDS, 2017, p. 35).

Education

Disability advocates report that children with disabilities rarely attend school past secondary level (USDS, 2017, p. 36). Schools, both public and private, often lack teachers trained to work with children with disabilities (USDS, 2017, p. 36). Together with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and the Status of Women has worked to integrate children with disabilities into public schools to promote inclusion, although the United States Department of State (USDS) (2017, p. 35-36) found that the majority of programmes for children with disabilities were in social centres rather than in schools.

Employment and livelihoods

There is no government data on the employment of people with disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 44). A 2014 study found that 74% of people with disabilities interviewed in the capital Algiers had an income equal to or less than 4,000 dinars per month, which is equal to the disability pension provided by the State, suggesting that people with disabilities living in Algiers have no additional income outside of the disability pension (HI, 2016d, p. 44).

People with disabilities have been paid less for doing the same work as their non-disabled colleagues (HI, 2016d, p. 27). There are sheltered workshops in Algeria but they do not pay people with disabilities enough to meet their basic needs (HI, 2016d, p. 38).

While the law stipulates that employers should reserve 1% of jobs for people with disabilities or face a fine, few businesses have abided by the law and the government is reported to not have enforced the payment of fines (USDS, 2017, p. 35; HI, 2016d, p. 33-34). Employers can also bypass the quota if they contribute to a special fund which allocates budget to adapt and equip workplaces for people with disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 33, 45). There is legislation which offers

monetary grants to employers and the provision of equipment and reasonable adaptation of the work environment to encourage them to employ people with disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 34, 45).

Social assistance

The Ministry of National Solidarity, Family, and the Status of Women provides disability benefits to persons with disabilities who registered with the government (USDS, 2017, p. 35; Bjork et al, 2017, p. 33). Persons with a full disability, who are unable to work, receive a monthly cash transfer of 4,000 dinars (approximately US\$36) known as La Pension Handicapée à 100%³ (Bjork et al, 2017, p. 27, 40). In 2016, about 800,000 people with disabilities held a “disability card,” which allowed them to benefit from social assistance from the government (HI, 2016d, p. 44). The Ministry also reported that it ran 222 centres throughout the country providing support for persons with intellectual, auditory, vision, and physical disabilities (USDS, 2017, p. 35). The government is supposed to cover all expenses related to reasonable accommodation and transportation to and from public facilities within education and vocational training facilities (HI, 2016d, p. 45; Bjork et al, 2017, p. 33).

Infrastructure

Many government buildings are inaccessible to people with disabilities (USDS, 2017, p. 35).

Political participation

Voting centres often lack accessible features which means that many people with disabilities face challenges in voting (USDS, 2017, p. 36).

Organisations working on disability inclusion⁴

Disabled peoples organisations (DPOs) are actively conducting advocacy operations to advance the rights of people with disabilities, although, they still require technical and managerial assistance (HI, 2016c, p. 1). They have partnered with national and international organisations on projects such as literacy, training, education for children with disabilities, making work pay, socialisation, and life projects (HI, 2016c, p. 1).

3. Egypt

Prevalence

Data gaps exist for the population of persons with disabilities in Egypt and there are a range of estimates about prevalence of disability (Lord et al, 2017, p. iv; HI, 2016d, p. 55). Lord et al (2017, p. iv) found data from the WHO suggesting that persons with disabilities comprise 12-15

³ As of 2016, a total of 238,968 persons with disabilities benefitted.

⁴ More information on organisations working on disability in Algeria can be found in the companion paper: Quak, E. (2018). *Mapping the organisations that address disability issues in North Africa*. K4D Helpdesk Report 313. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

million people, or about 12% of the population. A 2007 WHO household survey estimated 6% prevalence of hearing disabilities in the population, while deaf organisations report three million deaf or hard-of-hearing persons (Lord et al, 2017, p. iv). The WHO estimates one million blind and three million persons with visual disabilities in Egypt (Lord et al, 2017, p. iv). The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) found levels of disabilities in 2002 at around 10% of the population (74% mental disability, 15% mobility impairment, 7% visual impairment and 4% hearing impairment) (El Zawahry, 2018, p. 10). In some cases much lower disability rates are reported, ranging from 0.7%-1.8% of the total population (HI, 2016d, p. 55), which Gutenbrunner and Nugraha (2018, p. 2-3) suggest is 'unrealistic', questioning the data collection methods used in this instance. Stigma also results in people hiding their disability (El Zawahry, 2018, p. 9).

The major health problems contributing to disability were found to be 'congenital abnormalities (51.9%), followed by injuries/accidents (13.9%), old age (9.4%), epidemic and other diseases (6.9% and 6.8%), and birth-related conditions (5.4%)' (Gutenbrunner & Nugraha, 2018, p. 2).

Legislation and policies

Egypt ratified the UNCRPD in 2008 (El Zawahry, 2018, p. 11). The rights of persons with disability are guaranteed in Article 81 of the 2014 constitution: 'The state is committed to ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities and dwarves [sic], in all aspects; health, economic, social, political, cultural, entertainment, sports and education, and provide job opportunities for them, with the allocation of a percentage of jobs to persons with disability, and also is committed to the creation of enabling public facilities and environment surrounding them' (Gutenbrunner & Nugraha, 2018, p. 2).

USDS (2017b, p. 50) noted that by the end of 2016 there were still no laws prohibiting discrimination against persons with disabilities in education, air travel and other transportation, the judicial system, access to health care, or the provision of other state services. In addition there was no law mandating access to buildings or transport (USDS, 2017b, p. 50). Previous disability laws have also been criticised for their lack of implementation (El Zawahry, 2018, p. 13; Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 18). A new law on the rights of persons with disabilities was introduced in February 2018 prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability and reinforcing their right to education, learning, work and recreation, and the use of public facilities and services (Ismail, 2018).

The Ministries of Social Solidarity and Education share responsibility for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities (USDS, 2017b, p. 51). The Ministry for Social Solidarity works to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities and is responsible for the delivery of social protection schemes (HI, 2016d, p. 57). The National Council for Disability Affairs (NCDA), founded in 2012, is responsible for ensuring compliance with existing legislation (HI, 2016d, p. 57; Sida, 2014, p. 5).

Attitudes

There is shame, stigma and prejudice around disability in Egypt which prevents the full inclusion of people with disabilities and results in them being marginalised, ignored, and hidden away by their families (El Zawahry, 2018, p. 11, 14, 48; Othman & Sorial, 2017, p. 1557; Sida, 2014, p. 2). Widespread discrimination against people with disabilities, especially people with mental disabilities, also results in their lack of acceptance into society (USDS, 2017b, p. 51).

Healthcare

People with disabilities do not have full access to basic services which hinders their full inclusion in society (El Zawahry, 2018, p. 12). Gutenbrunner & Nugraha (2018, p. 3) and USDS (2017, p. 51) found that the health and rehabilitation services available in Egypt for children and adults with disabilities were lacking, of poor quality, and did not meet all the needs of people with disabilities. NGOs and faith-based charities also provide social and health services for people with disabilities, generally following the charity approach rather than the rights-based approach (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 18).

Education

Children with disabilities struggle to access education. For example, it is very difficult for children with low vision to enrol in school, and many drop out well before finishing secondary education (Lord et al, 2017, p. 10). Children with hearing impairments have limited or no access to accommodations such as Egyptian Sign Language, which hinders their ability to acquire reading and writing skills (Lord et al, 2017, p. 10). The lack of accessible transportation to school and environmental barriers mean children with physical impairments struggle to access education (Lord et al, 2017, p. 11). Only 28.3% of people with disabilities have a primary school diploma, half of the national rate (58.3%) (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 18). Vocational training typically occurs in segregated schools, although they often do not fully prepare young people with disabilities for the labour market (HI, 2016d, p. 59). The illiteracy rate among people with disabilities is 61% for males and 70% for females, double of the rate of illiteracy among people without disabilities (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 18).

A study⁵ by Lord et al (2017) assessed the educational needs of students with disabilities in Egypt, and services that public universities and regional technical colleges can provide to improve the accessibility of these institutions for these students. Barriers are reported to exist in: i) pre-higher education; ii) law/policy/practices (both formal and informal); iii) attitudinal barriers; iv) physical infrastructure/built environment and transport; and v) inaccessible course material and lack of assistive technologies (Lord et al, 2017, p. iv, x-xi). Universities with a disability support office and a university-wide disability policy had a more favourable enabling environment for students with disabilities than those without such a framework (Lord et al, 2017, p. ix). Students who were deaf or hard of hearing found universities less accessible than students with visual or physical impairments (Lord et al, 2017, p. ix). The regional technical colleges were less accommodating to students with disabilities than universities (Lord et al, 2017, p. ix).

Women with disabilities are regarded as less marriageable by families and a potential threat to the marriageability of female siblings (Lord et al, 2017, p. xi). This has led to women with disabilities being pushed into higher education due to assumptions about their marriageability and the need to attain economic self-sufficiency (Lord et al, 2017, p. xi). However female students with disabilities struggle as a result of general societal attitudes towards women,

⁵ Based on interviews with academic and administrative staff, students with physical and sensory disabilities, from 23 public universities and eight technical colleges, and personnel from key ministries and agencies, as well as representatives of local and international donors, private sector employers, disabled persons organisations, and NGOs working in the disability sector.

creating additional obstacles to accessing transportation and transiting around campus unless a family member is available to provide assistance (Lord et al, 2017, p. xii).

Employment and livelihoods

The employment rate of people with disabilities is reported to be half that of the non-disabled population, 21% compared to 40%, although there are no official statistics (Gutenbrunner & Nugraha, 2018, p. 2; HI, 2016d, p. 55). More people with disabilities work in formal wage employment than in informal wage employment (HI, 2016d, p. 27). People with disabilities face challenges finding employment for a range of reasons including low expectations, stereotypes, and negative attitudes around disability; lack of relevant skills as a result of exclusion from education and/or professional training; and inaccessible working environments and transportation to work (ILO, 2017, p. 12; Othman & Sorial, 2017, p. 1554, 1558; HI, 2016d, p. 27).

The law in Egypt 'provides for persons with disabilities to gain access to vocational training and employment but does not outlaw discrimination altogether' (USDS, 2017b, p. 50; Lord et al, 2017, p. xii). The government has a number of projects to encourage the employment of people with disabilities, including in partnership with international organisations (HI, 2016d, p. 56). Companies with more than 50 employees are supposed to employ at least 5% of workers with disabilities, but this quota has not been enforced and not all are aware of it (USDS, 2017b, p. 50; Othman & Sorial, 2017, p. 1554). In some cases companies had people with disabilities on their payroll to meet the quota without actually really employing them to do a job (USDS, 2017b, p. 51; ILO, 2017, p. 12; Othman & Sorial, 2017, p. 1554; Lord et al, 2017, p. xii; HI, 2016d, p. 27). Pending legislation⁶ seeks to reduce the quota to 20+ employees (Lord et al, 2017, p. xii; HI, 2016d, p. 56). Lord et al (2017, p. xii) conclude that the 'quota system is not effective in facilitating entry into quality, genuine employment opportunities'.

Handicap International⁷ (HI) (2016d, p. 29) found that employees with disabilities were treated with less dignity and respect than employees without disabilities and sometimes were asked to work additional hours in comparison to employees without disabilities without adequate extra compensation. They also found that it is 'common that formal employers hire people with disabilities and pay them below minimum wage, providing a salary as low as EGP300 (US\$50), even if the Egyptian labour law obliges employers to pay a minimum wage of EGP 1200 (US\$135)' (HI, 2016d, p. 27). 'Due to a lack of opportunity for people with disabilities to access decent, high paying jobs many people with disabilities prefer to receive cash assistance from the government rather than working in low-paying, unfulfilling positions' (HI, 2016d, p. 59).

The ILO (2017) has gathered together thirteen examples of good practice in relation to the hiring of people with disabilities by a range of different companies in Egypt. Many of the featured companies are responding to their obligations to employ people with disabilities under Egyptian law (ILO, 2017, p. 6). However, they are also motivated to grow these initiatives further as a result of seeing the success and productivity of employees with disabilities (ILO, 2017, p. 6).

⁶ The new draft disability law also suggests that government provides tax exemption and/or reductions for employers of people with disabilities and/or entrepreneurs with disabilities, employers who exceed the assigned employment quota for persons with disabilities and the employees with disabilities themselves (HI, 2016d, p. 56).

⁷ Now renamed Humanity & Inclusion.

Working together with the government and civil society organisations⁸ has allowed these companies to recruit persons with disabilities and design accessible and inclusive work environments, leading to decent work for people with disabilities (ILO, 2017, p. 8). Finding candidates with disabilities who have the appropriate skills and experience for the jobs available can be challenging and organisations working with people with disabilities can help connect companies with potential candidates (ILO, 2017, p. 8, 12). Many of the organisations help people with disabilities prepare for work by providing them with training in soft-skills, English-language, and/or technical business skills (ILO, 2017, p. 8). They also help companies to be more accessible and inclusive through accessibility audits, guidance on design and adaptations, as well as disability sensitisation trainings for managers and staff (ILO, 2017, p. 8, 12). Companies have realised that many basic adaptations can be made at a low cost (ILO, 2017, p. 12). While at the beginning of the process of recruiting and employing people with disabilities an investment of time and resources may be necessary, companies have found that the return on this investment is an effective and committed workforce (ILO, 2017, p. 12, 14-33; Othman & Sorial, 2017, p. 1557). For example, the four branches of KFC staffed by people with hearing impairments are currently more profitable than other KFC restaurants nationwide (ILO, 2017, p. 14).

As work plays an important role in social inclusion, 'employing persons with disabilities has led to achievements both within the workplace as well as outside (in sporting and cultural activities, for example)' (ILO, 2017, p. 6). These partnerships have also contributed to making Egyptian society as a whole more inclusive of people with disabilities (ILO, 2017, p. 8).

Social assistance

People with disabilities receive special subsidies to purchase household products, wheelchairs, and prosthetic devices, and expeditious approval for the installation of new telephone lines and reductions on customs duties for specially equipped private vehicles (USDS, 2017b, p. 51). There is some confusion among people with disabilities about how to access social protection services (Bjork et al, 2017, p. 45).

Transport

While people with disabilities can travel on government-owned mass transit buses free of charge, the buses are not wheelchair accessible (USDS, 2017b, p. 51; Bjork et al, 2017, p. 28).

Political participation

Political representation of people with disabilities has helped to raise interest in disability issues (El Zawahry, 2018, p. 14). In the 2015 elections, nine persons with disabilities were elected to parliament (none were elected in 2012) (USDS, 2017b, p. 37). This is a requirement of the House of Representatives law which states that the House of Representatives must include at least 56 women, 24 Christians, and nine persons with disabilities (USDS, 2017b, p. 37). Attia

⁸ Including:

Ability Contact Centre, for training and recruiting.

DAESN, for training and placement.

Ebtessema, for preparation, placement, and employment support.

Helm Foundation, for preparation, placement, accessibility audits and inclusion trainings.

Masr El Kheir, for salary support to persons with disabilities.

SETI Center - Caritas Egypt, for preparation and placement.

Zayee Zayak, for promotion of inclusion.

(2017, p. 18) suggests that the 'Egyptian revolution paved the way for disabled people's voices to be heard which led to disability inclusion becoming integrated in the new Egyptian constitution and the appointment of nine disabled MPs'.

Organisations working on disability inclusion⁹

A number of different international and national organisations are working to enhance the quality of life of people with disabilities and there is growing interest and awareness of the rights of people with disabilities in Egypt, although efforts to ensure full inclusion of people with disabilities in society is still limited (El Zawahry, 2018, p. 11, 14).

4. Libya

Prevalence

HI (2016, p. 15) estimates that there could be more than 900,000 people with disabilities in Libya (14.3%). Prior to the conflict, disability prevalence was estimated to be 2.9% (Heinsjo-Jackson & Ismail, 2014, p. 10). Indicative estimates of people with disabilities in Libya carried out during an assessment of internally displaced persons in Libya using the Washington Group approach suggest that 47% of people with disabilities had difficulties with sight; 45% had difficulties with movement or walking; 34% had difficulties with hearing; and 17% had difficulties with communicating or using language (REACH, 2016, p. 17. 34-35).

A 2016 protection assessment¹⁰ found that people with disabilities made up 3.4% of the people assessed (OCULUS Team, 2016, p. 4). The most common disability they reported was physical and permanent disability (not due to the conflict) and was found in higher proportions in urban Tripoli (2.57%) (OCULUS Team, 2016, p. 5). Conflict related disabilities were more frequent in rural Benghazi (2.2%) when compared to urban Benghazi (0.6%) or urban Tripoli (1%) (OCULUS Team, 2016, p. 5, 21). Mental disabilities, visual, speech and hearing impairment were found more frequently in urban Tripoli when compared to Benghazi (OCULUS Team, 2016, p. 5).

A third of disabilities were suggested to be linked to conflict related injuries resulting from small arms and light weapons and landmines and unexploded ordnance (REACH, 2016, p. 35). The conflict has also left many Libyans with psychological distress and mental health disorders (HI, 2016, p. 12). 'Non-conflict related causes of disability include Libya's high motor vehicle accident rate, an increasing incidence of non-communicable disease such as cardiovascular conditions, a relatively high rate of genetic and hereditary disorders resulting from consanguineous marriage, and endemic trachoma resulting in blindness' (Hamed El Sahly & Cusick, 2016, p. 12).

⁹ More information on organisations working on disability in Egypt can be found in the companion paper: Quak, E. (2018). *Mapping the organisations that address disability issues in North Africa*. K4D Helpdesk Report 313. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

¹⁰ Carried out in 29 neighbourhoods and villages in the districts of Benghazi and Tripoli.

Legislation and policies

Libya recently ratified the UNCRPD on the 13th February 2018¹¹. The Constitutional Declaration provides for 'monetary and other types of social assistance for the "protection" of persons with "special needs" with respect to employment, education, access to health care, and the provision of other government services, but it does not explicitly prohibit discrimination' (USDS, 2017c, p. 27; HI, 2016b, p. 15). In addition the government does not effectively enforce the provisions for the rights of people with disabilities, including in relation to access to buildings, information, and communications (USDS, 2017c, p. 27; HI, 2016b, p. 15).

There is a Disabilities Department in the Ministry of Social Services and a Disabilities Office in the Ministry of Education (IFES, 2018, p. 5).

Attitudes

People with disabilities are subject to negative stereotypes (IFES, 2018, p. 8). There is severe social stigma around mental illness (HI, 2016b, p. 13). The Social Security Fund, a Libyan DPO, attributes the violations that people with disabilities in Libya experience to the prevalence of the charity, medical approach rather than a rights based approach¹².

Healthcare

A 2016 study¹³ looking at internally displaced persons in Libya found that service provision for people with disabilities was largely inadequate (REACH, 2016, p. 4, 35). The lack of adequate services for people with disabilities was attributed to a number of factors including, closures of services due to the conflict, the high prices of essential assistive technologies, logistical challenges in supply routes such as road blockages, and a lack of trained medical staff (REACH, 2016, p. 36; Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 20).

A study¹⁴ by HI (2016b, p. 15-16) looking at the health sector in the western region of Libya, which has been greatly affected by the conflict in the country, found that it is unable to meet many of the health needs of people with disabilities, including those with newly acquired impairments as a result of conflict injuries. Transportation to health facilities is also an issue (HI, 2016b, p. 18). Women with disabilities' access to rehabilitation services is especially affected by the security situation and unsafe roads (HI, 2016b, p. 21). There is very low capacity in the health sector to respond to the mental health needs of the population (HI, 2016b, p. 13-14).

¹¹ https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&lang=_en&clang=_en

¹² Documentary: Disability Rights Advocacy in Libya <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly7uzKfhLgk>

¹³ Based on 162 interviews and community level data across the South, West and East of Libya.

¹⁴ Data was collected from key personnel in 13 public and private health structures in Western Libya in February to March 2016, with a round of qualitative interviews in March 2016 in 4 health structures.

Education

39.7% of people with disabilities are illiterate (compared to 12.2% of the total population), a much higher proportion of which are female (54.8%) compared to male (28.8%) (Heinsjo-Jackson & Ismail, 2014, p. 61). Boys with disabilities are more likely to go to school than girls with disabilities (Heinsjo-Jackson & Ismail, 2014, p. 61). Children with disabilities have been denied access to mainstream schools¹⁵. The Disabilities Office in the Ministry of Education ‘works to assist students with disabilities to complete their education within the public school system through provision of direct support to students and teachers and by supplying the necessary tools, equipment, and training required to do so’ (IFES, 2018, p. 6). Special education teachers lack necessary skills and there are low expectations of the potential of children with disabilities¹⁶.

Employment and poverty

Poor awareness of disabilities, low incomes, difficult accessibility and the lack of home care and a social safety network hamper the integration of people with disabilities, especially economically (Hamed El Sahly & Cusick, 2016, p. 12).

Social assistance

The Ministry of Social Affairs provided people with disabilities with pensions, entitlements and access to free treatment in the government rehabilitation centres (Hamed El Sahly & Cusick, 2016, p. 12). 96,031 persons or 1.5% of the population in 2013 held a disability card provided by the General Directorate of the Social Solidarity Fund (Curtis & Geagan, 2016, p. 20). People with disabilities resulting from the 2011 “liberation battle” are considered differently by Article 1 of Law 4 of 2013, and are supposed to receive more benefits than other people with disabilities (HI, 2016b, p. 14; Hamed El Sahly & Cusick, 2016, p. 12).

Infrastructure and communications

Few public facilities had adequate access for persons with disabilities, resulting in restricted access to employment, education, and health care (HI, 2016, p. 14; USDS, 2017c, p. 27). New constructions and pavements were not constructed in an accessible way (USDS, 2017c, p. 27). Information or communications are not very accessible (USDS, 2017c, p. 27).

Political participation

DPOs have been working with International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) on elections and the electoral process and on the political empowerment of people with disabilities¹⁷. Their work helped put disability issues into the constitution¹⁸.

¹⁵ Documentary: Disability Rights Advocacy in Libya <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly7uzKfhLgk>

¹⁶ Documentary: Disability Rights Advocacy in Libya <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly7uzKfhLgk>

¹⁷ Documentary: Disability Rights Advocacy in Libya <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly7uzKfhLgk>

¹⁸ Documentary: Disability Rights Advocacy in Libya <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly7uzKfhLgk>

Media

IFES (2018, p. 3) found that people with disabilities are largely absent from media reporting, and 'when they were included in television and newspaper stories, it was largely sensationalised and fostered further marginalisation'. In response IFES has trained and encouraged media to 'advocate for equality for persons with disabilities and to uphold universal rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Libya' (IFES, 2018, p. 3, 6). In addition, it supported disabled people's organisations to engage effectively with journalists (IFES, 2018, p. 3).

Organisations working on disability inclusion¹⁹

DPOs are active in Libya and are demanding measures to improve the rights of persons with disabilities and a move to the rights model and from the medical model²⁰ (HI, 2016b, p. 15).

5. Morocco

Prevalence

The 2014 census which used the Washington Group Short Set of questions found that in 2014 there were 1703424 persons with disability (5.1% of the population) (Lkhoul, 2017, p. 12). Slightly higher numbers were found in the Second National Survey on Disability Prevalence, which found a disability prevalence rate of 6.8%, or 2,264,672 people with disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 70). There were no significant differences between men and women but the disability prevalence rate was 5.5% in rural areas and 4.8% in urban areas (Lkhoul, 2017, p. 12). There are approximately 300,000 people living with various degrees of deafness²¹ in Morocco (IFES, no date, p. 2).

Legislation and policies

Morocco ratified the UNCRPD in 2009 (IFES & USAID, 2018, p. 1). In 2016 Parliament adopted Framework Law 97.13 on the rights of persons with disabilities, a step toward harmonising legislation with the UNCRPD (HRW, 2018, p. 6). The law 'prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, and access to health care', and provides for accessible regulations and building codes and equal access to information and communications (USDS, 2017d, p. 34). There is also an integrated public policy for persons with disabilities (CRPD, 2017, p. 1). However, Human Rights Watch found that 'the Framework Law fell short in some areas, such as in guaranteeing access to inclusive education for children with disabilities, and in affirming the right of legal capacity' (HRW, 2018, p. 6; CRPD, 2017, p. 5). In addition, the law limits the type of employment people with disabilities can access, establishing a list of jobs people with disabilities are not allowed to do (HI,

¹⁹ More information on organisations working on disability in Libya can be found in the companion paper: Quak, E. (2018). *Mapping the organisations that address disability issues in North Africa*. K4D Helpdesk Report 313. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

²⁰ Documentary: Disability Rights Advocacy in Libya <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ly7uzKfhLgk>

²¹ There are four different types of sign language used across different geographic locations in Morocco, and some regions have none at all (IFES, no date, p. 2).

2016d, p. 26). It also only protects persons who hold a valid “disability card”, does not have a time frame for its entry into force, and fails to include measures to protect persons with psychosocial and/or intellectual disabilities, persons with disabilities belonging to minority, ethnic and linguistic groups, and disabled refugees and asylum seekers (CRPD, 2017, p. 2). In addition, USDS (2017d, p. 34) notes that the government has not effectively enforced or implemented these laws and regulations. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is also concerned that the concept of disability in various older national laws is contrary to the human rights model of the UNCRPD (CRPD, 2017, p. 1-2).

Trani et al (2017, p. 216) note that the recent policy against discrimination and for the promotion of the rights of the persons with disabilities is a step in the right direction but a strong political will is required for them to bring long-term change. Civil society has an important role in maintaining momentum behind them (Trani et al, 2017, p. 216).

The Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity has responsibility for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities (USDS, 2017d, p. 34). The Ministry of Health has adopted a working agenda on health and disability; the Ministry of Finance has established a social cohesion fund; and the Ministry of National Education And Vocational Training has issued ministerial circulars and memoranda to facilitate the right to education of persons with disabilities (CRPD, 2017, p. 1). The Office for People with Disabilities is the national coordinating committee for policies created for people with disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 72).

Attitudes

Stigma is an issue for people with disabilities and there are negative perceptions of people with disabilities in Moroccan society (Trani et al, 2015, p. 536; CRPD, 2017, p. 4). ‘There is still widespread belief in Morocco that persons with disabilities are severely limited in their productive capacity and represent a burden on their families and a ‘tax’ on society as whole’ (Trani et al, 2015, p. 520).

Age and gender

The Committee for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is concerned about the multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination against, and marginalisation of, women and girls with disabilities, and the discrimination by association experienced by women with children with disabilities (CRPD, 2017, p. 3). Despite the violence and abuse experienced by women and girls with disabilities, prevention and support services are lacking (CRPD, 2017, p. 3, 6). For example, women’s shelters for victims of domestic abuse are not accessible to women with disabilities (USDS, 2017d, p. 29). ‘Women make up only 8.9% of the working population of people with disabilities, according to the Second Survey on Disability prevalence’ (HI, 2016d, p. 25).

There are reports of ‘violence against, abuse of and use of corporal punishment on children with disabilities, including abandoned children with disabilities, in the home, in alternative care and day-care settings and in schools’ in Morocco (CRPD, 2017, p. 3). Children with disabilities have also been forced to beg (CRPD, 2017, p. 6).

Healthcare

60% of people with disabilities struggle to access health services as a result of the geographical distance of health centres, lack of accessible healthcare facilities, lack of specialised medical

services, and lack of accessible communication about public health issues (HI; 2016, p. 1; CRPD, 2017, p. 9).

Education

The 2014 census found that 66.5% of people with disabilities have never been to school compared to 35.3% of people without disabilities (Lkhoul, 2017, p. 16). 67.1% of people with disabilities were illiterate, compared to 30% of their non-disabled peers (Lkhoul, 2017, p. 16). Women with disabilities were more likely to have no educational attainment (79.5%) compared to men with disabilities (53.4%) (Lkhoul, 2017, p. 16).

The government provides some support for the integration of children with disabilities in education, although private charities and civil society organisations were found to be primarily responsible for the integration and education of children with disabilities, as the government has allocated limited budget for special or inclusive education (USDS, 2017d, p. 34; Hayes & Bulat, 2017, p. 25). Most children with disabilities are in segregated special education rather than included in the mainstream education system (CRPD, 2017, p. 9). Barriers to accessing mainstream schools include 'long distances, a lack of teachers trained in inclusive education, a lack of accessible curricula, a lack of knowledge of sign language and negative societal attitudes opposing the attendance of children with disabilities' (CRPD, 2017, p. 9).

Employment and livelihoods

The 2014 census found that 86.6% of people with disabilities were economically inactive (Lkhoul, 2017, p. 18). Only 10.7% of people with disabilities were employed (Lkhoul, 2017, p. 18). There is discrimination against people with disabilities in the workplace and few efforts to provide reasonable accommodation (CRPD, 2017, p. 10; HI, 2016d, p. 34). According to the second national survey of people with disabilities, a slightly higher figure of 13.6% of people with disabilities of working age were employed, which is three times lower than the national employment rate (HI, 2016d, p. 70). 39.3% of respondents worked in the private sector, mainly unregistered and 32.3% were self-employed (HI, 2016d, p. 70). 69.04% of people with disabilities were not compensated for their work (HI, 2016d, p. 70). Women with disabilities are less likely to be employed than men with disabilities, with 91.1% of people with disabilities employed in the formal sector male (HI, 2016d, p. 70). The survey finds that 'among people with disabilities who don't work, 37.9% would like to work but do not think it is possible, and 31.1% would like to work but face discrimination due to their disability' (HI, 2016d, p. 25).

There is a quota of 7% employment quota for people with disabilities in public service, although it is far from achieving the quota (HI, 2016d, p. 71). There is legislation which offers monetary grants to employers to encourage them to employ people with disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 34). Morocco also offers tax breaks or reduction in social security taxes to employers that hire people with disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 34, 71). Various different organisations are working to support the employment of people with disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 73). The state runs a number of sheltered workshops (HI, 2016d, p. 38).

Families typically support people with disabilities, although some people with disabilities survive by begging (USDS, 2017, p. 34). Two out of three people with disabilities do not receive any form of social security (HI, 2016, p. 1).

Research in 2011 showed that the 'lost income resulting from the exclusion of individuals with disabilities from work has been estimated to result in national-level losses of 9.2 billion dirhams (approximately US\$1.1 billion)', or 2% of the country's GDP (Hayes & Bulat, 2017, p. 5; Banks & Keogh, 2016, p. 79).

Multi-dimensional poverty

Based on two household surveys carried out in 2013 and 2014²², Trani et al, found that people with disabilities face a higher level and intensity of multidimensional poverty. There was a gap in terms of education, employment and health related quality of life between people with disabilities and people without disabilities (Trani et al, 2017, p. 216; Trani et al, 2015, p. 528). 'In both urban and rural areas, for both male and female adults, whatever the disability status and type, deprivation in employment is the leading contributor to poverty' (Trani et al, 2015, p. 532). Women with disabilities were poorer than men with disabilities, especially in terms of education (Trani et al, 2015, p. 536).

While this situation has improved over time access to education is still far from being secured, while access to employment remains uncertain, with people with disabilities in more precarious jobs and working for lower wages than the rest of the working age population (Trani et al, 2017, p. 216). The social exclusion of people with disabilities has a 'considerable cost in terms of health related quality of life estimated to be the equivalent of a reduction of 20 years' of the average life expectancy of persons in good health and without a disability in Morocco (Trani et al, 2017, p. 216).

Social assistance

People with disabilities are provided with food aid (Bjork et al, 2017, p. 28). Morocco has also had a disability card which helped people with transport and other benefits (Bjork et al, 2017, p. 33). High numbers of people with disabilities, including children, are living in institutions and there is an absence of community support services that provide for inclusion of people with disabilities in the community (CRPD, 2017, p. 7). Only 9.2% of people with disabilities said they were aware of the services provided by the Ministry of Social Development, Family, and Solidarity (Bjork et al, 2017, p. 45).

Infrastructure and transport

There is no requirement for buildings to be retrofitted to ensure accessibility and the authorities have rarely enforced the building codes for new buildings which would ensure accessibility for people with disabilities (USDS, 2017d, p. 34).

Most public transport is inaccessible to people with disabilities, although the national rail system offered wheelchair ramps, accessible bathrooms, and special seating areas (USDS, 2017d, p.

²² A case-control randomised household survey in Morocco and Tunisia, covering two geographical regions in each country (Rabat-Salé and Chaouia-Ouardhiga in Morocco, and Tunis and Béja in Tunisia, which compared the situation of persons with and without disabilities using three different measures of multidimensional poverty. The team conducted interviews using the individual modules in Morocco and Tunisia with 682 and 695 respondents with disabilities and 657 and 528 non-disabled respondents, respectively.

34). Many people with disabilities also struggle to acquire the necessary mobility aids and assistive devices that would help them to live independent lives (CRPD, 2017, p. 8).

Political participation

Many polling stations in Morocco are not accessible to people with disabilities, with the Le Collectif pour la Promotion des Droits des Personnes en Situation de Handicap (CPDPH), a network of Disabled Persons Organizations (DPOs), observing that 75.5% of polling stations were not easily accessible, including in relation to accessible instructions and ballot papers (IFES, no date, p. 1; CRPD, 2017, p. 11). IFES has been working with the National Human Rights Council (CNDH), civil society organisations, academics, poll workers and constitutional law practitioners to increase access to the political process for persons with disabilities (IFES & USAID, 2018, p. 1).

Access to justice

People with disabilities face a number of barriers to accessing justice including lack of accessibility, lack of knowledge about disability issues within the judicial sector, and the absence of substantive procedural accommodations (CRDP, 2017, p. 5).

Organisations working on disability inclusion²³

Various DPOs and other organisations are working to promote the rights of persons with disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 72).

6. Tunisia

Prevalence

Government sources suggest that there are around 2.15% to 2.3% or 236,437 to 388,119 people with disabilities in Tunisia (HI, 2016d, p. 77). Trani et al (2015, p. 520) estimate the prevalence of severe disability at 5.7%. WHO estimates are even higher at 16.3% (Kanter et al, 2015, p. 265).

The UN Partnership to Promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities report for Tunisia finds that 42.1% had a motor disability; 27.7% has a mental disability; 13.3% had a visual disability; 12.4% has an auditory disability; and 4.4% has multiple disabilities (Kanter et al, 2015, p. 266).

Legislation and policies

Tunisia ratified the UNCRPD in 2008, and close collaboration with disabled people organisations led to the adoption of the Tunisian National Charter on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Banks & Keogh, 2016, p. 20). The charter shifted the discourse around disability to a human rights perspective (Banks & Keogh, 2016, p. 20). Article 48 of the constitution is a stand-alone article on disability obliging the state to protect persons with disabilities against any form of discrimination (Kanter et al, 2015, p. 272). The law in Tunisia 'prohibits discrimination against

²³ More information on organisations working on disability in Morocco can be found in the companion paper: Quak, E. (2018). *Mapping the organisations that address disability issues in North Africa*. K4D Helpdesk Report 313. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

persons with physical or mental disabilities in employment, education, air travel and other transportation, access to health care, or the provision of other state services' (USDS, 2017e, p. 23).

The Ministry of Social Affairs has the responsibility for protecting the rights of persons with disabilities²⁴ (USDS, 2017e, p. 23). The Charter resulted in the setting up of institutional mechanisms such as a dedicated parliamentary commission (Banks & Keogh, 2016, p. 20). In 2010, a Higher Council for Social Development and for the Welfare of Disabled Persons was created, under the mandate of the Prime Minister (Sida, 2014, p. 6).

Trani et al (2017, p. 216) note that the recent policy against discrimination and for the promotion of the rights of the persons with disabilities is a step in the right direction but a strong political will is required for them to bring long-term change. Civil society has an important role in maintaining momentum behind them (Trani et al, 2017, p. 216).

Attitudes

Despite a supportive policy framework, people with disabilities are largely segregated from society, and are not able to exercise the same rights as ordinary citizens (Sida, 2014, p. 2). Stigma and discriminatory attitudes arising out of prejudice restrict people with disabilities social participation (Trani et al, 2015, p. 536).

Education

There are approximately 300 government-administered schools for children with disabilities, five schools for blind students, one higher-education school, and one vocational training institution (USDS, 2017e, p. 23). Educations centres are reported to face serious staffing problems and are often located out of reach of children with disabilities (Kanter et al, 2015, p. 281).

Employment and livelihoods

According to the Leadership and Empowerment for Action and Disability Project (LEAD) Project Study only 13.3% of people with disabilities engaged in regular economic activity, three times lower than people without disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 25). According to another study, people with disabilities earned an income 40% lower than the income of people without disabilities (HI, 2016d, p. 27). 59.3% of people with disabilities reported not having any individual income (Bjork et al, 2017, p. 16)

At least 2% of public and private sector jobs (above 100 employees) are supposed to be reserved for persons with disabilities but authorities do not widely enforce this law and many employers are unaware of it (USDS, 2017e, p. 23; HI, 2016d, p. 7, 34, 78). HI (2016d, p. 7) found that people with disabilities were more likely to work in the public sector rather than the private sector. Tax incentives are offered to companies to encourage the hiring of people with disabilities

²⁴ "Strategie nationale et plan d'action sur l'integration socio-economique des personnes handicapees en tunisie," (2014) is the national strategy on economic inclusion of people with disabilities. HI (2016d, p. 78) reports that it is not yet approved by the state, but the Ministry of Social Affairs is currently preparing an action plan for its implementation.

(USDS, 2017e, p. 23; HI, 2016d, p. 34, 79). The state runs a number of sheltered workshops (HI, 2016d, p. 38).

Multi-dimensional poverty

Similarly to the research in Morocco, Trani et al (2015, 519, 528; 2017, p. 216) found that people with disabilities faced a higher level and intensity of multidimensional poverty and there was a gap in terms of education, employment and health related quality of life between people with disabilities and people without disabilities, based on two household surveys carried out in 2013 and 2014 in Tunisia. 'In both urban and rural areas, for both male and female adults, whatever the disability status and type, deprivation in employment is the leading contributor to poverty' (Trani et al, 2015, p. 532). Women with disabilities were poorer than men with disabilities, especially in terms of education (Trani et al, 2015, p. 536).

While this situation has improved over time access to education is still far from being secured, while access to employment remains uncertain, with people with disabilities in more precarious jobs and working for lower wages than the rest of the working age population (Trani et al, 2017, p. 216). The social exclusion of people with disabilities has a 'considerable cost in terms of health related quality of life estimated to be the equivalent of a reduction of 18 years' of the average life expectancy of persons in good health and without a disability in Tunisia (Trani et al, 2017, p. 216).

Social assistance

The government has issued cards to people with disabilities for benefits such as unrestricted parking, free and priority medical services, free and preferential seating on public transportation, and consumer discounts (USDS, 2017e, p. 23; Bjork et al, p. 33). However, only 45% of people with disabilities have a disability card and there is some confusion about how to access social protection services (Bjork et al, 2017, p. 31-32, 45). The Ministry of Social Affairs has managed centres in Tunis, Kairouan, Nabeul, and Sfax that provide short- and long-term accommodation and medical services to people with disabilities who lack other means of support (USDS, 2017e, p. 23). 'People with intellectual disabilities and those with mental disorders are limited in their access to the disability card and basic services' (Trani et al, 2015, p. 520).

Infrastructure, communications, and transport

Since 1999, the law requires all new public buildings to be accessible to persons with physical disabilities, and the government generally enforced the law, although many old buildings are still inaccessible (USDS, 2017e, p. 23).

Kanter et al (2015, p. 275) find there is a 'a strong preference for specialised solutions (transport, school, and so on) and much less focus on ensuring full accessibility of mainstream services, notwithstanding a quite comprehensive accessibility strategy'.

The government has not ensured access to information and communication (USDS, 2017e, p. 23).

Political participation

People with disabilities have struggled to participate in political processes as a result of difficulties accessing voter and civic information in accessible formats; lack of accessibility of

some voting centres and insufficient training of polling officials; and a lack of awareness and interest of political parties in disability rights (Kanter et al, 2015, p. 285).

Organisations working on disability inclusion²⁵

There are organisations that advocate for rights and welfare of persons with disabilities in Tunisia (Kanter et al, 2015, p. 278-279).

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²⁵ More information on organisations working on disability in Tunisia can be found in the companion paper: Quak, E. (2018). *Mapping the organisations that address disability issues in North Africa*. K4D Helpdesk Report 313. Brighton, UK: Institute of Development Studies.

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