

COMMUNITY-BASED INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT A PARTICIPATORY DIAGNOSTIC STUDY ON THE RIGHTS AND NEEDS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

IN THE TOWN OF SURIF 2025



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1. Overview of the Study and the Methodology

Objectives and Significance of the Study

This study aims to provide a participatory diagnosis of the reality and needs of persons with disabilities in Surif, through engaging the local community in analyzing challenges and identifying relevant opportunities. This approach stems from a firm belief in the pivotal role that local communities can play in driving development efforts, ensuring that persons with disabilities are engaged as active contributors across all aspects of life, and preventing their marginalization or exclusion.

The study also seeks to enhance coordination and strengthen linkages among governmental organizations, the municipality, development organizations, community-based organizations, volunteer and civic initiatives, and the private sector. This is to develop more inclusive and effective responses to the needs of persons with disabilities. The study supports the inclusion of persons with disabilities into community services and activities, based on the human rights principles set forth in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), particularly in the areas of education, health, employment, social protection, and community participation.

Furthermore, the study aspires to reinforce community partnerships in shaping local policies and programs, building a knowledge base grounded in local realities to inform decision-making and guide development interventions that align with the rights and needs of marginalized groups in general, and persons with disabilities in particular. The findings of this study are expected to form a strategic framework for partnership between QADER for Community Development, Surif Municipality, local organizations, and the community accountability team in the town. This partnership will contribute to implementing direct interventions and activities that aim to bridge existing gaps in the enjoyment of rights and to strengthen the active participation of persons with disabilities.

QADER will also facilitate networking and coordination between Surif Municipality, local initiatives and organizations, as well as governmental, civil society, and international development actors. This will promote joint action on agreed priorities and mainstream inclusion across all areas of life.

Methodology:

The study follows a participatory approach that combines field research with secondary data analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the situation of persons with disabilities in the targeted communities. This approach is guided by rights-based and developmental standards that ensure the inclusion of disability issues while taking into account social, economic, and political factors affecting access to basic services and rights.

To ensure data quality and accuracy, a series of methodological steps were implemented starting with capacity building and training. QADER formed inclusive youth accountability teams in the targeted areas and trained them on various topics including field research tools, the rights of persons with disabilities, inclusion requirements, advocacy, and community accountability.

The methodology of the study relied on diverse data sources, including:

Primary data: collected through direct interviews, focus group discussions, and community meetings.

Secondary data: obtained from official reports, national statistics, the local strategic plan, and data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics—particularly disability-related data for the targeted towns—along with updated information from the Ministry of Education regarding schools in the targeted areas.

The process of collecting primary data in the town of Surif included the following:

- **Questionnaires:** Surveys were completed with 62 households that have family members with disabilities, and 62 persons with disabilities themselves, to identify their current situation and needs. Additionally, surveys were filled out with 85 community members to explore their attitudes and perceptions toward persons with disabilities and their rights.
- **Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with representatives of local institutions, including municipalities, community-based organizations, kindergartens, and public and private health institutions, to assess the inclusiveness of the services provided.
- **Focus groups:** Three focus group discussions were organized, involving 42 participants, including persons with disabilities (children, adults, and women), their families, and representatives of local and educational institutions in Surif.
- **Community meetings:** A community meeting was held to review preliminary data. It brought together representatives from various sectors to discuss the findings, verify their accuracy, and identify local priorities based on field data. The meeting also aimed to agree on possible interventions to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities and ensure their access to rights across different sectors. Participants included representatives of local authorities, persons with disabilities and their families, and representatives of local institutions.

2. Context

2.1 Overview of the Town

The town of Surif is situated northwest of Hebron city. It is bordered to the south by the towns of Kharas, Nuba, and Beit Ula; to the north by the villages of Al-Jab'a and Nahalin; to the east by the town of Beit Ummar; and to the west by the 1967 Green Line. Surif is situated at an elevation of approximately 600 meters above sea level. As of 2024, the population of Surif is estimated at 20,489 people. Children under the age of 15 account for about 37.64% of the total population, while individuals aged over 65 constitute approximately 4.13%.

Water Services: About 90% of buildings in the town are connected to the water network. Residents rely on two main sources for water supply: the Palestinian Water Authority and domestic rainwater harvesting wells. There is a notable water shortage in summer, where water is supplied to the town only once a month, compared to four times a month during winter.

Electricity Services: All residential units in Surif (100%) are connected to the electricity grid, which is managed by the municipality and provides continuous service (24/7).

Sanitation: There is no sewage network in the town. Instead, residents rely on cesspits for wastewater disposal.

Waste Management: The municipality provides waste collection services using a designated vehicle that collects waste on a daily basis.

Roads and Transportation: Surif has an internal road network of 85 km, of which 55 km are paved. However, 20 km of the paved roads are in poor condition, and 10 km remain unpaved. The roads connecting Surif to neighboring communities extend for about 30 km, 10 km are paved, 18 km are in poor condition, and 2 km are unpaved. Regarding transportation, public transportation is available in the town, linking it to the city center and nearby villages. The transportation system includes 10 public transport vehicles, 20 informal vehicles, and 10 licensed taxis.

2.2 Socioeconomic Characteristics of families of Persons with Disabilities

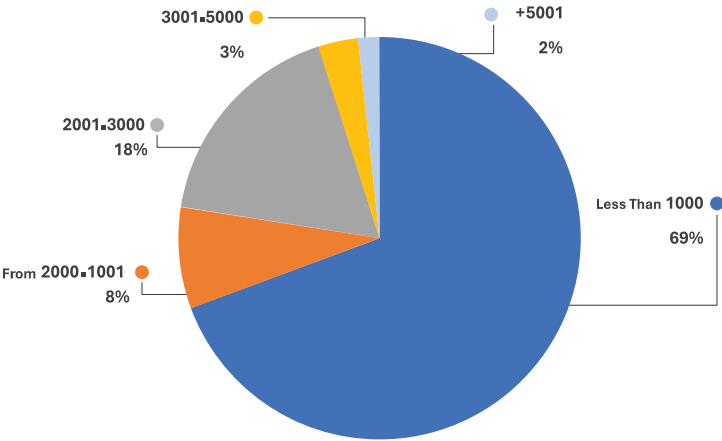
Household Size and Family Members with Disabilities: The average household size for families with persons with disabilities in Surif is approximately 5.2 members, compared to the general average of 4.7 members in the West Bank as of 2022 (according to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics).

It was also found in the field results that around 25% of heads of surveyed households who are persons with disabilities. Additionally, 60.3% of surveyed families include one member with a disability, 22.4% include two members with disabilities, and 17.2% include three or more.

Disability types varied: approximately 31.6% of persons with disabilities reported difficulties in mobility and hand use, 7% had hearing disabilities, another 7% had visual disabilities, and 54.4% had multiple disabilities.

About 10.3% of households with persons with disabilities reported having at least one family member with a disability who is unemployed, while 6.9% of these households have two or more persons with disabilities who are unemployed.

Economic Status and Income Level: Findings show that about 69.4% of households with persons with disabilities in Surif have a monthly income of no more than 1,000 shekels. Around 8% have a monthly income that does not exceed 2,000 shekels, which places them below the poverty line of 2,470 shekels per month. In contrast, only about 1.6% of these households have a monthly income exceeding 5,000 shekels.



“Relative distribution of the income of households of persons with disabilities by different income categories – Shekel.”

Monthly Household Expenditure: The average monthly expenses for households with persons with disabilities in the town of Surif is approximately 2,260 shekels, compared to the average monthly expenditure in the West Bank, which stands at 5,800 shekels for a household of an average size of 5.2 members (according to 2017 data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics).

This gap is largely attributed to the low average income of households with persons with disabilities relative to their spending needs. The average monthly spending on healthcare and treatment is around 380 shekels, of which 200 shekels are allocated specifically to the needs of persons with disabilities. Meanwhile, the average monthly expenditure on food for these households is approximately 1,169 shekels.

2.3 Organizations in the Town of Surif

In addition to the municipality, the town of Surif is home to 11 main organizations working in various sectors, including social and economic empowerment, educational and health services, and community development.

Surif Municipality: The municipality provides a range of services aimed at improving residents' quality of life and well-being, covering infrastructure and social development services. The municipal council consists of 13 members, none of whom are persons with disabilities. The municipality employs 50 staff members, including 8 women and 2 persons with disabilities.

The municipality offers several benefits and interventions for persons with disabilities in the town. These include exemptions from electricity and water fees and efforts to make public facilities and schools more accessible. Additionally, the municipality collaborates with the Surif Zaka Committee to establish a rehabilitation center designed to serve persons with different types, which is expected to open in 2025.

The municipality places great importance on promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities in community and economic life. It launches initiatives to employ them in various municipal roles and supports their employment in the private sector by offering incentives and proposing fee exemptions for trades and professions. Through a twinning partnership with the German municipality of Neuwied, several key projects have been implemented such as equipping the health center to offer free services to persons with disabilities and establishing an accessible park. There has also been cooperation with the "Sihtak Charitable Association" to provide low cost healthcare services for persons with disabilities.

Moreover, the town's strategic plan includes several objectives related to supporting persons with disabilities. These include establishing a rehabilitation center, providing economic empowerment programs, and launching awareness campaigns to shift community perceptions and behaviors and improve understanding of the rights of persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities made up about 7% of participants involved in developing the strategic plan.

Surif Women's Club: Established in 2002, the Surif Women's Club operates under the Rural Women's Development Association and is registered with the Palestinian Ministry of Interior.

The club aims to empower local women and strengthen their social, economic, and educational capacities. It has a general assembly of 250 members, including 8 women with disabilities. The club is managed by a board of 7 women and relies on 12 volunteers. Located in the old town of Surif, the club offers a variety of activities, including workshops, training sessions, medical days, and recreational trips, in which women with disabilities sometimes participate.

Al-Weeam Charitable Association: Established in 2016 and registered with the Ministry of Interior, Al-Weeam operates under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Development. The association aims to empower women through awareness-raising activities and skilbuilding, such as hand embroidery and food production. The association includes 30 members in its general assembly, with one woman with a disability among them. It is managed by a seven-member administrative board. While the association's premises serve as a vibrant hub for activities, the facility is not accessible to persons with disabilities. A Weeam collaborates with organizations such as Medical Relief and the Red Crescent Society to organize awareness workshops and training, focusing on women's issues and enhancing their social and economic capabilities.

Surif Zakat Committee: The Surif Zakat Committee was established to support families in need, patients, and orphans, relying primarily on local community donations collected through mosques and community centers. It comprises 8 volunteer members (6 men and 2 women), appointed by the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, with no persons with disabilities on the board. The committee owns its building, which is currently being developed into a rehabilitation center for persons with disabilities.

The committee prioritizes vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, offering services such as medication, food parcels, essential medical supplies, and financial support for small business projects.

Surif Women's Embroidery Cooperative Association: Founded in 1984 as a non-profit and registered with the Ministry of Labor, the association seeks to economically empower women by providing employment in embroidery. It has a general assembly of 110 members and a board of 7 women, with no member women with disabilities. The association provides remote cash for-work work opportunities for women—including mothers of persons with disabilities. Products are exported in cooperation with international organizations.

In its community contribution efforts, the association supports persons with disabilities by dedicating a free of charge floor of its building to offer speech therapy and psychological relief services at symbolic fees, administered by a rehabilitation specialist. It also provides medical aids such as crutches and assistive devices in coordination with donor organizations.

Nahdit Shabab Al Reef Charity Society: Established in 1964 and registered with the Ministry of Interior, the association aims to enhance community well-being through various social, cultural, and recreational activities. It operates a nursery and kindergarten and manages an event hall. The association also organizes awareness, training, and social events in partnership with various organizations. It has 260 general members (190 men and 70 women), including 20 persons with disabilities, and is governed by a board of 9 members.

Despite its efforts, the association's services for persons with disabilities remain limited, focusing mainly on food and financial aid and their inclusion in public events such as community iftars. There are no dedicated programs for persons with disabilities due to lack of accessible facilities and a dedicated budget.

Surif Association for Higher Education: Founded in 2007 and registered with the Ministry of Interior, under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education, the association supports students in need from Surif and surrounding areas by providing scholarships and various educational services. Its notable projects include establishing a computer center offering free programming courses, and operating a kindergarten and tutoring center. The association collaborates with both local and international organizations to provide educational support. While it does not specifically target persons with disabilities, some do participate in its activities.

Surif Charitable Association for Orphan Care: Established in 2007 and registered with the Ministry of Interior, this association is dedicated to serving orphans in Surif and nearby areas. Its general assembly includes 35 members, 5 of whom are women, while the board consists of 7 men, with no persons with disabilities represented. The association, which relies on volunteers, provides orphans with financial and in-kind support (food, clothing, and education), and organizes monthly assistance programs, food and stationery distribution, and organizing communal iftars.

While the association focuses mainly on orphans, it offers limited services to orphaned children with disabilities. A school under construction is being designed to be accessible for students with disabilities.

Surif Cooperative Association for Livestock: Registered with the Cooperative Work Authority under the 2017 Cooperative Societies Law, this association was founded in 2011 to improve the local economic situation through training and support in agriculture and livestock production. It promotes economic empowerment of its members by enhancing their agricultural skills. The association has 27 general members (19 women and 8 men), none of whom are persons with disabilities, and a 7-member administrative board (5 women and 2 men). Persons with disabilities are considered a priority group in some activities through support extended to their families for agricultural projects.

Banaat Al-Reef Charitable Association: Established in 2021 and registered with the Ministry of Interior, under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Development, this association works to improve the financial, health, and social status of local women through education, economic empowerment, and social assistance programs such as food parcel distribution. The general assembly consists of 30 members, including 5 women with disabilities. The board is made up of 7 women. The association relies primarily on volunteers from among its general membership.

Charitable Society for Honoring the Elderly (Ikram) Surif Branch: A branch of the main Charitable Society for honoring the elderly (Ikram) based in Halhoul (established in 2018), it aims to provide care and support to the elderly in Palestinian society through social, medical, and recreational services that enhance their well-being and stability. Main activities include free medical days, psychological support, and recreational activities. The association also distributes mobility aids such as wheelchairs and crutches in partnership with charitable organizations. The administrative board consists of 7 members, including 2 women. Only one female volunteer works in the Surif branch. The association's work is mostly volunteer-driven.

Sihtak (Your Health) Charitable Association: Founded in 2021 and registered with the Ministry of Interior, “Sihtak” works to enhance healthcare and social services in the local community, with a particular focus on supporting persons with disabilities and facilitating their access to essential services. The board includes 9 members (8 men and 1 woman), and the general assembly has 35 members, including 5 women, though none are persons with disabilities.

The association focuses on raising health and social awareness and supporting marginalized groups, especially persons with disabilities, through community campaigns and psychosocial support programs.

The association runs a medical center that provides a variety of specialized services to persons with disabilities and older adults at symbolic prices.

The Medical Center: Located in a two-story building owned by the association, covering a total area of 400 square meters, the center employs 13 staff members (10 men and 3 women), most of whom are trained to work with persons with disabilities. The center offers a wide range of medical services, including physiotherapy, speech therapy, radiology, emergency care, and psychological and social support. It also provides home care services for persons with disabilities who cannot visit the center, and in most cases, free of charge assistive devices are provided.

Key Challenges and Barriers Faced by Local Organizations in Including Persons with Disabilities

- **Lack of comprehensive strategic plans for disability inclusion:** The majority of local organizations in Surif lack inclusive strategic plans, with limited planning or institutionalization of disability inclusion within their programs and services.
- **Absence of representation in governance structures:** Persons with disabilities are entirely unrepresented in the administrative boards of all local organizations, and their representation in general assemblies is extremely limited. This lack of inclusion contributes to their marginalization in decision-making processes.
- **Lack of trained personnel to address the needs of persons with disabilities:** Most staff, volunteers, and board members across local organizations in the town have not received any training on how to engage with persons with disabilities, understand their needs, or be aware of their rights. This results in poor responsiveness to their needs and the failure to adopt inclusive approaches in institutional interventions.
- **Limited funding and weak networking:** Financial restrictions represent a significant challenge for local organizations, which mostly rely on external funding to implement their programs. This dependency restricts their ability to respond to the needs of persons with disabilities, particularly as external funding often comes with predefined priorities set by donors. In addition, the limited partnerships with local and international actors further reduce opportunities to strengthen institutional capacity.

- **Lack of accessible infrastructure:** Many institutional buildings are not accessible or adapted to meet universal design requirements. Common barriers include the absence of accessible entrances, elevators, wide corridors, or adapted restrooms. This severely limits the ability of persons with disabilities to access and engage with local organizations.
- **Lack of universal design and reasonable accommodations in programming:** Institutional programs and activities often fail to incorporate principles of universal design or reasonable accommodations, such as accessible transportation, adapted communication materials (e.g., announcements), or other facilities.
- **Negative societal attitudes and low awareness:** Deep-rooted negative perceptions and social stigma toward persons with disabilities present significant barriers to inclusion. In addition, low awareness among families of persons with disabilities and the wider community regarding the importance of inclusion further limits their participation in community activities.

3. The Reality of Persons with Disabilities in the town

3.1 The Right to Access Education

The right to education is a fundamental human right guaranteed by both national legislation and international conventions, without discrimination. The Amended Palestinian Basic Law (the constitution) explicitly prohibits discrimination based on disability, including with regard to education, as outlined in Article (9) under the chapter on constitutional rights and freedoms.

This right is further reinforced by Law No. (4) of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, particularly Article (10), which guarantees equal opportunities for students with disabilities to access educational organizations, including schools and universities. The law obliges the Ministry of Social Development, in coordination with relevant authorities, to ensure appropriate educational assessments are conducted to identify the type and degree of disability. It also mandates the development of adapted curricula and learning materials, as well as the provision of necessary accommodations to ensure an inclusive learning environment.

Moreover, the law emphasizes the importance of training qualified professionals to work with students with disabilities, ensuring that they receive education across various levels and types, in line with their needs and in a way that promotes their active participation in society.

With the publication of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in the official gazette under Decree-Law No. (36) of 2023, these national obligations must now align with the Convention's provisions—especially Article (24) on the right to education, which lays the foundation for inclusive education systems. This includes, among other things, ensuring that no person with a disability is excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability, recognizing and accommodating individual learning differences, promoting the learning of Braille and sign language, and ensuring the availability of educators—including persons with disabilities themselves—who are proficient in these forms of communication.

3.1.1 Early Education

The town of Surif includes eight kindergartens distributed geographically, differing in size and services, and serving children aged 4–6 years. Most of them are run by non-profit organizations and associations. The total number of children enrolled in kindergartens is around 660, of whom 52% are boys and 48% are girls. The children are taught by 33 teachers, with an average of about 20 children per teacher. As for classrooms, the average number of children in each class is about 23. Interviews with kindergarten administrations in Surif indicated that the percentage of children with disabilities enrolled in kindergartens is about 2% of the total number of children.

Data from the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2017) showed that the illiteracy rate among persons with disabilities aged 10 years and above in the town is about 37.2%, compared to 4.4% at the level of Hebron Governorate. The data also indicate that around 78% of persons with disabilities in the town of Surif have never enrolled in education, or enrolled but later dropped out.

Kindergartens face social challenges related to some families' reluctance to enroll their children with disabilities. About 18% of heads of surveyed households who are persons with disabilities reported that they have children of kindergarten age with disabilities who are not currently enrolled, due to fears of social stigma or bullying. On the other hand, some families expressed concern about having children with disabilities in the same classrooms as their children, considering it an additional challenge to the educational process.

The tuition fees in Surif's kindergartens are about 130 shekels per month, with financial exemptions provided to some low-income families of persons with disabilities.

Facilities and infrastructure: In Surif's kindergartens, there is one toilet for every 23 children. Outdoor yards are also available, with an average area of 100 m², most of which are covered with artificial grass and shaded with canopies that cover about 65% of the area.

Field visits and interviews with kindergarten administrations in Surif revealed a lack of accessibility and universal design requirements in kindergarten buildings. Most kindergartens lack the necessary adaptations for access and use by children with disabilities. This includes non accessible entrances, corridors, and toilets, as well as the absence of elevators, outdoor spaces, and accessible playgrounds.

In addition, most kindergartens lack modern electronic educational equipment that supports early learning. There are also no curricula or teaching aids that address the specific needs of children with disabilities, which negatively affects their inclusion in the educational process. The transportation used by kindergartens is also not adapted for children with disabilities, making it more difficult for them to reach kindergartens and participate in learning activities. Although most of the teachers in Surif's kindergartens hold university degrees and have participated in training courses in early childhood education, they lack specialized training in working with children with disabilities, including knowledge of their rights and relevant

legislation. The activities provided in kindergartens also fail to consider the needs of children with disabilities, as they are often excluded from physical activities without being offered suitable alternatives.

3.1.2 Basic and Secondary Education

3.1.2.1 Key Indicators for Basic and Secondary Education at the Community Level

Students in the town of Surif receive their education through 11 schools (8 public, 1 private, and 2 run by UNRWA), with a total of 229 male and female teachers. These schools include four secondary schools (one of which is a vocational industrial school), in addition to seven basic schools for boys and girls. The total number of students enrolled in these schools is 5,317 (2,673 males and 2,644 females), including 19 students with disabilities (14 males and 5 females).

Indicators of Basic and Secondary Education in the Town Compared to National-Level Indicators		
General Indicator	Surif	National-level figures
Number of students per teacher	23.2	19.4
Number of students per counselor	531	300-200
Number of students per class section	32.4	26.4
Classroom space per student (m ²)	1.7	1.5
Number of students per toilet	46.6	30.1
Number of students per drinking fountain	54	32.5
Number of students per sink	54	49.7

The comparison of educational indicators in the town of Surif with national averages reveals significant challenges in several areas. The number of students per teacher in Surif (23.2) is higher than the national average (19.4), and the number of students per class section (32.4) exceeds the national average (26.4). This reflects overcrowded classrooms and an increased academic burden on teachers, an issue confirmed by teachers in focus group discussions regarding its impact on the quality of education.

3.1.2.2 School Accessibility in Surif from the Perspective of Persons with Disabilities

Most persons with disabilities and their families in the field study and focus group discussions reported that the schools in the town are not accessible for students with disabilities. They pointed out weak enrollment to basic and secondary education, whether due to financial costs or physical barriers.

One of the most notable deficiencies mentioned was the poor overall design of educational facilities in relation to the needs of students with disabilities. Results showed that 3 schools, or

27% of the schools in the town, lack ramps to facilitate the mobility of students with disabilities. Additionally, general design or reasonable accommodations considerations are overlooked in school facilities, such as libraries, computer and science labs, classrooms, and sanitary units, among others.

Students with disabilities and their families in the focus groups also described the educational tools, computers, and curricula as inadequate and not meeting their needs. Regarding resource rooms, there is only one resource room in a boys' elementary school.

Participants in the focus groups also highlighted the lack of qualified staff to deal with people with disabilities, with approximately 83% of heads of surveyed households who are persons with disabilities believing that there are no qualified teachers to work with students with disabilities in the schools. Teachers themselves confirmed in focus groups that they lack the knowledge and skills required to support students with disabilities.

3.1.2.3 Enrollment Rates in Basic and Secondary Education among Student with Disabilities

Students with disabilities in Surif face a range of challenges that hinder their access to inclusive education. These challenges begin even before entering school due to the absence of early detection services and early intervention programs that could help them prepare for enrollment in education.

Participants in the education sector focus groups indicated that many schools refuse the enrollment of students with disabilities. Administrative authorities in schools justify this refusal with several reasons, including maintaining the flow of the educational process, the lack of suitable academic plans, overcrowded classrooms, and the inability to provide individualized attention to students with disabilities. In addition, parents' limited awareness of their children's right to education and their lack of knowledge about the necessary accommodations for inclusion often lead them to accept the refusal of their children by schools without challenging it.

Within the school environment, students with disabilities face numerous challenges, most notably the lack of acceptance by their peers. About 22% of students with disabilities reported feeling unaccepted by their classmates. This issue contributes to increased instances of bullying and violence, with 45.8% of surveyed students with disabilities reporting that they have been subjected to bullying or violence by their peers and, in some cases, even by teachers. Furthermore, families of students with disabilities noted that their children's presence in schools is often only symbolic due to ongoing marginalization and exclusion. In some instances, teachers are compelled to isolate students with disabilities within classrooms or even remove them entirely, preventing their meaningful participation in the learning process.

3.1.3 Enrollment in Higher Education

Persons with disabilities in Surif face significant challenges in accessing higher and intermediate education. According to findings from the field study, only about 3.5% of the total number of persons with disabilities in the town are currently enrolled in higher or intermediate education. The most prominent barriers include the lack of accessible infrastructure in higher education facilities, as well as the absence of transportation services adapted to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the town.

Within university campuses, lecture halls are often not adequately equipped to support the engagement of students with disabilities with the educational content, which limits their ability to participate effectively. The field study also revealed a complete absence of qualified instructors capable of addressing the needs of students with disabilities — a concern echoed by all participating individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, the curricula pose an additional challenge, as they fail to accommodate the diverse and individualized learning needs of students with disabilities.

3.1.4 Enrollment in Vocational Education and Training

The field study revealed that only about 3.5% of persons with disabilities in Surif are enrolled in vocational training programs. This low participation rate is mainly due to several challenges, most notably the lack of information about enrollment procedures and mechanisms. In fact, 98.2% of persons with disabilities reported not receiving appropriate awareness or guidance programs about joining public or private vocational education.

Additionally, the absence of nearby vocational training centers was identified as a major obstacle. The nearest public vocational centers are located in Beit Ummar and the city of Hebron, which limits access for persons with disabilities, especially given the lack of accessible transportation options.

Moreover, most respondents of field interviews and focus groups highlighted significant shortcomings in the general design and infrastructure of educational facilities, including classrooms, labs, and workshops. The educational materials and curricula are also not adapted to meet the needs of learners with disabilities. Another major concern raised was the lack of qualified teaching staff, as many vocational education personnel reportedly lack the training and experience necessary to effectively support the needs of students with disabilities.

3.2 The Right to Economic Empowerment and Employment

The right to work and employment is considered one of the fundamental rights enshrined in Palestinian legislation. The amended Palestinian Basic Law (Constitution) explicitly affirms in Article (25) the right of every citizen to work, and the regulation of labor relations in a way that ensures justice for all and provides workers with healthcare and social protection. Additionally,

Article (9) strictly prohibits discrimination based on disability, which includes the right to work.

Furthermore, Article (10) of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. (4) of 1999 assigns the Ministry of Social Development, in coordination with all relevant parties, the responsibility of ensuring the rights of persons with disabilities in the fields of vocational rehabilitation, training, and employment based on the principle of equal opportunities. It also obligates governmental and non-governmental organizations to employ at least 5% of persons with disabilities among their staff and to make workplaces accessible and suitable for their needs, while encouraging private organizations to employ them by offering tax incentives.

According to the Council of Ministers' Decision No. (40) of 2004 on the executive regulations of Law No. (4) of 1999, Article (12) emphasizes that any company or institution that does not employ persons with disabilities in accordance with the law (minimum 5%) must pay the equivalent of a minimum wage salary for each unfilled quota into a "Special Fund for Persons with Disabilities." This fund, to be established by a decision from the Minister of Social Development, is intended to provide financial support to unemployed persons with disabilities.

However, despite the significance of this provision for the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities and the many years that have passed since the enactment of the executive regulations, this fund has yet to be established—contrary to what is mandated by law.

3.2.1 Economic Participation and Employment

The vast majority (64%) of families of persons with disabilities surveyed in Surif believe that access to the labor market is difficult, while 31.6% consider it moderately difficult. This is largely due to several challenges that limit the economic participation of persons with disabilities both men and women.

Based on interviews with persons with disabilities, focus group discussions involving both employed and unemployed individuals with disabilities and their families, as well as employers, the study revealed several key barriers contributing to the low economic participation of persons with disabilities:

Lack of workplace accessibility and adaptation: According to the field study, 96.5% of persons with disabilities in Surif reported that public and private organizations in the area are not accessible or adapted to accommodate and employ persons with disabilities. This is in direct violation of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, its executive regulations, and the obligations arising from the publication of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in the Official Gazette under Decree-Law No. (36) of 2023.

Discrimination and bias in the workplace: Discrimination and negative bias remain among the most significant barriers for persons with disabilities in the labor market. According to the data, 98.2% of respondents confirmed the presence of discrimination in work environments. This manifests in various forms, including outright refusal to employ individuals with disabilities, lack of equal opportunities for promotion and training, or imposing unjustified restrictions that

limit their access to employment. These biases often stem from societal and cultural factors such as a lack of awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities and persistent stereotypes about their ability to perform tasks efficiently.

Lack of Training and Educational Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities: The findings of the field study showed that 79% of persons with disabilities in Surif have not participated in any training or workshops aimed at building their capacity to access the labor market. This is attributed to several factors, including the lack of training programs specifically designed for them, the absence of accessible training environments in terms of infrastructure and means of access, and limited awareness among organizations of the importance of involving them in such programs. Financial and social challenges also play a role, such as limited family support or a lack of suitable opportunities.

Support for Self-Employment Projects for Persons with Disabilities: Only 2% of persons with disabilities and their families surveyed in Surif reported having received support to start income-generating projects. However, most of these projects halted. This is due to various factors, including the absence of prior studies on market needs in the area, which leads to support for projects that do not align with actual demand. Furthermore, the reliance on generic or repetitive types of projects limits their chances of success due to market saturation. A lack of experience in project management and insufficient skills—such as managing livestock or poultry farming—often results in project failure. Additionally, capital is often consumed without the ability to cover operational costs later on, coupled with limited financial capacity to develop or reinvest in the project to ensure its sustainability.

3.3 The Right to Health

Article (22) of the Amended Palestinian Basic Law (Constitution), under the section on Public Rights and Freedoms, states:

1. The law shall regulate social and health insurance services, as well as disability and old-age pensions.
2. The care of the families of martyrs and prisoners, and of the wounded, the affected, and persons with disabilities, is a duty whose provisions shall be regulated by law. The Palestinian National Authority shall guarantee them access to education and social and health insurance services.

This constitutional Article (22) confirms two different levels of commitment. In the first paragraph, the organization of social and health insurance and disability and old-age pensions is left to regular legislation—meaning that the Authority is not obligated to provide these services free of charge, but rather according to what is regulated by law and competent authorities. However, the second paragraph is more decisive and clearer, stating that caring for the families of martyrs and prisoners, the wounded, the affected, and persons with disabilities is a duty of the Palestinian National Authority, regulated by law. More importantly, the Article obligates the Authority to guarantee them access to education, health, and social insurance services.

In constitutional language, the word “guarantee” implies full responsibility—meaning the Authority is directly accountable for providing these services free of charge, and beneficiaries should not be required to pay for them. Any law that does not achieve this meaning would be considered unconstitutional.

Law No. 4 of 1999 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Article 10) requires the Ministry of Social Development, in coordination with all relevant bodies, to guarantee free access to health services under the government health insurance system for persons with disabilities and their families.

Despite the fact that free access to health, social insurance, and education services for persons with disabilities is a right guaranteed by the Basic Law (Constitution), and despite the clear reference in the Disabilities Law to free health insurance for persons with disabilities and their families—and even after the issuance and official publication of the 2021 Governmental Health Insurance Regulation for Persons with Disabilities in the Palestinian Official Gazette the practical implementation continues to violate the Basic Law, the Disabilities Law, and the 2021 regulation regarding free health insurance for persons with disabilities.

3.3.1 Available Health Services

Persons with disabilities in the town of Surif receive healthcare services through both public and private health centers in the town. These include the “Muscat Medical Center”, a third level government clinic offering primary care, general medicine, pediatrics, dentistry, a laboratory, and x-ray services. There’s also a UNRWA clinic providing medical care especially for Palestinian refugees, in addition to several private clinics.

Surif also hosts the “Sihtak” Center, which offers a variety of specialized health services such as physical therapy, speech therapy, radiology, emergency services, and psychosocial support. The center provides services to persons with disabilities for nominal fees and offers home visits for those unable to attend in person. It also distributes assistive devices free of charge in most cases.

Despite the presence of health services in the town, several challenges limit access for persons with disabilities, as reported by them and their families. These include a lack of specialized services, inaccessible health facilities, and untrained medical staff. Families also highlighted the absence of early disability screening, which can delay diagnosis and appropriate care. Others are forced to seek specialized care outside the town—an added cost not all families can afford.

3.3.2 Health Services Covered under Health Insurance

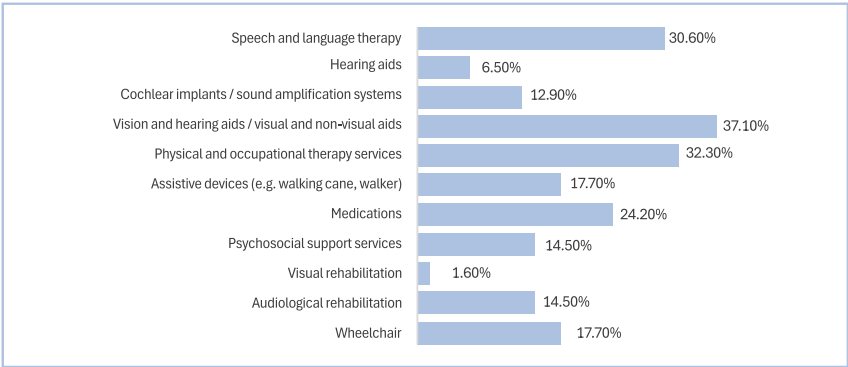
Although 73.2% of families of persons with disabilities in Surif have free health insurance, the level of coverage does not meet their actual healthcare needs. As a result, 27.4% of these families pay out of pocket for services such as treatment, medications, nutritional supplements, and physical therapy. They also bear the costs of transportation, placing a significant financial burden on low-income families.

3.3.3 Needs of Persons with Disabilities (Coverage and Access to Services)

Persons with disabilities in Surif face significant gaps in meeting their basic health needs, making them heavily reliant on personal resources or irregular institutional support. Around 24.2% of their families reported a need for rehabilitation services (such as physical and occupational therapy), which are usually not covered under the Ministry of Health’s insurance and are instead paid for by the patients themselves. More than a third of persons with disabilities in Surif reported a need for psychological and social support services, but the lack of specialized centers and trained staff makes such services difficult to access.

In terms of assistive devices, 17.7% said they needed wheelchairs, 14.5% hearing aids, and 14.5% required visual or auditory aids. Still, 16% of families bear the cost of these devices themselves.

Moreover, nearly half of persons with disabilities have ongoing medication needs, which are often not regularly provided by the Ministry of Health or are excluded from health insurance coverage, forcing families to shoulder these expenses themselves.



“Distribution of health and rehabilitation needs for people with disabilities in Surif

3.4 The Right to Participation in Cultural and Recreational Activities

The participation of persons with disabilities, especially children, in cultural and recreational activities in the municipality of Surif is extremely limited and largely depends on modest efforts by local organizations.

The Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. (4) of 1999 affirms the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Development, in coordination with all relevant bodies, to provide opportunities for sports and recreation for persons with disabilities. It also mandates the adaptation of playgrounds, halls, camps, clubs, and their facilities, and supports the participation of persons with disabilities in national and international sports programs. Furthermore, it requires a 50% reduction in entrance fees for persons with disabilities to government cultural and recreational venues.

More than one-third (32%) of persons with disabilities confirmed that they feel marginalized by both the local community and local institutions. This marginalization is reflected in the lack of attention given to their participation in various community activities carried out in the town, as well as the failure to take the necessary measures to ensure their inclusion.

On the other hand, persons with disabilities and their families emphasized the lack of inclusive and well-designed cultural and recreational programs that take their needs into account. The study results showed that the participation rate of persons with disabilities in cultural and recreational activities is around 2%. More than half of the respondents with disabilities and their families indicated that local organizations do not consider the requirements of universal design and the necessary accessibility arrangements to ensure the participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities. This includes the lack of accessible transportation, adapted communication materials (such as announcements), and other forms of necessary accessibility arrangements.

Families of persons with disabilities also stated that local organizations only take the necessary measures when required by the funding body. In addition, they affirmed that poor economic conditions represent a major barrier to the access and participation of persons with disabilities in cultural and recreational activities.

Meanwhile, most local organizations considered the lack of accessibility in public facilities in the town and their reliance on external funding to implement programs and activities as major challenges to including persons with disabilities in cultural and recreational initiatives.

They also pointed to a lack of community awareness as one of the factors affecting the participation of persons with disabilities in cultural and recreational activities. They highlighted the limited awareness among families of persons with disabilities about the importance of such activities in promoting the mental and social well-being of their children. This issue is further exacerbated by the weakness and scarcity of awareness programs about the cultural and recreational rights of persons with disabilities and their significance.

3.5 The Right to Participation in Political Life

Article (2) of the Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 1999 affirms the right of persons with disabilities to enjoy a free life, dignity, and access to various services, just like other citizens. It states that they have the same rights and are subject to the same duties within the limits of their abilities and capacities, and that disability should not be a reason to prevent them from obtaining those rights.

Article (3) of the law places a comprehensive obligation on the state to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and to facilitate their access to those rights.

Although the law does not explicitly mention political rights, they are nonetheless guaranteed by the abovementioned articles, as they clearly refer to the full range of rights for persons with disabilities—political rights naturally included. Moreover, Article (4) addresses the right of persons with disabilities to form their own organizations and associations, which falls under political rights. This ultimately means that political rights for persons with disabilities are legally protected.

Additionally, the issuance of Law by Decree No. (36) of 2023, which published the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in the Official Gazette (Palestinian Gazette), is expected to further strengthen the entire framework of rights for persons with disabilities, particularly political rights.

Interviews, focus groups, and field research conducted with persons with disabilities, their families, and local organizations revealed a variety of challenges to their political participation, including:

Lack of universal design: Persons with disabilities cited the inaccessibility of public facilities, registration centers, and polling stations as one of the main barriers they face in Surif. In fact, 75% reported having difficulties accessing these locations or participating in public meetings and political activities due to the absence of necessary accommodations such as accessible buildings, transportation, and other facilitative arrangements.

The participation rate of persons with disabilities in political lifewhether running for office, voting, or attending public meetings did not exceed 18% in the town of Surif.

Social perceptions: Negative societal perceptions pose a significant obstacle. Field study results showed that half of the persons with disabilities feel the local community sees them as incapable of making political decisions.

Tribal and political influences: Many persons with disabilities and their families view tribal and political influences as major barriers to political participation. These factors heavily shape political attitudes and decisions in the community, making it particularly difficult for persons with disabilities—especially those without strong tribal backing—to attain political positions or have influence in decision-making.

Lack of awareness programs and accessible media: The vast majority of persons with disabilities and their families pointed to the absence of accessible media materials—such as sign language broadcasts or publications in Braille—as a major limitation to understanding and exercising their political rights. Although the Central Elections Commission has made efforts, including issuing Braille materials and using sign language in instructional videos, these efforts remain limited. There is a need for coordinated efforts between official and non-official entities, including the media and civil society organizations, to produce accessible, inclusive, and sustainable awareness and media content that meets the needs of persons with various disabilities, to raise awareness about political rights.

3.6 The right to Social Protection and their Access to Services

The right to social protection is one of the fundamental rights guaranteed by both international and local laws, including the Palestinian Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities No. 4 of 1999. This law emphasizes the importance of providing a safe and supportive environment that ensures persons with disabilities have access to care services and protection from all forms of discrimination and exclusion.

3.6.1 Access to Social Services

19% of families of persons with disabilities in Surif reported receiving financial or in-kind assistance from various sources, including the Ministry of Social Development, UNRWA, and local organizations. On average, they received assistance no more than six times throughout the year, with the average monthly value of assistance estimated at around 300 shekels per family.

24% percent of families of persons with disabilities in Surif face significant difficulties in accessing services provided by the Ministry of Social Development and other institutions.

Persons with disabilities face significant challenges in accessing social services provided by the Ministry of Social Development, UNRWA, and other organizations. These services include financial and in-kind assistance, health insurance, assistive devices, customs exemptions, and more.

73% of families of persons with disabilities indicated that bureaucratic procedures and administrative complexities—which often require multiple transactions and repeated visits to service-providing organizations—represent a major barrier. These challenges are further exacerbated by the lack of accessible buildings and facilities, as well as the absence of accessible transportation options, a concern echoed by 80% of persons with disabilities and their families.

Additionally, they pointed out that the complex and rigid eligibility criteria prevent the majority of persons with disabilities from accessing these services.

Two-thirds of persons with disabilities also considered long waiting periods and the irregularity of service provision to be serious challenges, especially in the absence of a stable source of income. As a result, they often rely on the assistance provided to meet their basic needs.

3.6.2 The Reality of Protection and Community Support for Persons with Disabilities

The study findings revealed a lack of awareness among families of persons with disabilities regarding their right to protection and access to services, available measures, and mechanisms for reporting cases of violence and abuse against persons with disabilities. Participants in the focus groups indicated that there are no effective protection mechanisms in place within the town.

It is estimated that about 10% of families of persons with disabilities hide their children with disabilities due to fear of social stigma.

Focus group participants reported that persons with disabilities are exposed to various forms of violence, including verbal and physical abuse, neglect, marginalization, exclusion, and discrimination—particularly children and women. They emphasized that gender-based discrimination is especially common among women and girls with disabilities, as families tend to impose stricter restrictions and limitations on their participation in community activities compared to males.

Violence in schools: More than half of the persons with disabilities reported experiencing violence within schools, whether from peers or, in some cases, from teachers. Focus group participants noted that boys are subjected to physical violence at higher rates than girls.

28% of persons with disabilities reported experiencing violence within their homes.

On the other hand, teachers and counselors participating in the focus groups confirmed that they intervene directly in cases of violence among students, especially those involving students with disabilities. When incidents have a psychological impact on the student, they are referred to one-on-one counseling sessions. Teachers also participate in awareness and violence prevention efforts through classroom activities, school radio broadcasts, and awareness sessions on the risks of violence.

However, it is worth noting that the vast majority of families of persons with disabilities believe that teachers lack sufficient training to properly handle cases of violence involving students with disabilities.

3.7 Community Attitudes toward Persons with Disabilities

Field results showed that 26% of the local community members in Surif hold negative attitudes towards persons with disabilities, believing that they are a burden on their families and society. 25% of the community members agreed that they do not believe persons with disabilities can make a positive contribution to their community. Additionally, 45% of them believed that persons with disabilities cannot rely on themselves to meet their basic needs.

42% of community members feel concerned and fearful about having a person with a disability in their family.

On the other hand, 97% of the community members believe that access to education and free healthcare services is a fundamental right for persons with disabilities, and that granting them full rights, including modifying laws and regulations, can facilitate their access to all services.

87% of the community members think that providing the necessary support for persons with disabilities to participate in elections (such as facilitating access to polling stations and providing appropriate explanatory materials) gives them a better chance to participate in voting and elections. Sixty percent of the community members agreed that persons with disabilities can influence political decision-making if they participate in elections.

Meanwhile, 15% of the community members believe that persons with disabilities are incapable of working effectively in various sectors, while 85% believe that providing job opportunities that accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities would enhance their inclusion in the labor market.

4 Findings

1. Most Disadvantaged Groups

All persons with disabilities in the town of Surif face a range of barriers that prevent their active participation in all sectors and limit their well-being and dignity. These barriers impose psychological, social, and economic burdens on them and their families. These challenges intensify for families with more than one person with a disability, large families with more than six members, poor families, families headed by women, or those where the head of the household is unemployed or elderly. These barriers are particularly severe for children of school age, individuals with intellectual disabilities (especially severe or multiple ones), those with chronic illnesses, persons with disabilities seeking employment, and boys and girls outside the public education system.

2. Weak Infrastructure Services

A number of essential services are either unavailable or weak. The town suffers from a problem with water supply through the network in the summer, which forces many families to rely on purchasing water tanks. There is also a lack of sewage services, with residents relying on water tanks. Additionally, the infrastructure of roads and sidewalks is weak and inaccessible for persons with disabilities. The absence of accessible public transportation hinders their ability to reach various services or forces them to bear additional financial burdens by using private taxis.

3. High Poverty Levels and Their Impact on Persons with Disabilities in Surif

There is an increase in the poverty rate among the families of persons with disabilities, due to high unemployment rates, especially after the war on the Gaza Strip and the halt of work in the occupied territories. The increased dependency ratio due to the large number of family members in households of persons with disabilities further worsens the situation. The problem is compounded by the low percentage of families of persons with disabilities receiving financial or material assistance from the Ministry of Social Development, UNRWA, and other organizations. Poverty is especially severe for families in need of medications that are not covered by health insurance, either for persons with disabilities or for those with chronic illnesses. Poverty contributes to the exclusion and deprivation of persons with disabilities, particularly children, from accessing various services such as education, health, and rehabilitation. It also significantly affects their participation in recreational, cultural, and political activities.

4. Access to Quality Education for Persons with Disabilities in Surif

Despite the presence of 11 schools and 7 kindergartens in the town, this has not positively impacted access of children with disabilities to preschool or basic education. Most children and youth with disabilities are still excluded from the educational system, leading to high illiteracy rates and limited employment opportunities. The main reasons for the disparity in enrollment rates between persons with disabilities and their peers in educational organizations are the absence of early disability detection services and early intervention programs that help prepare them for school. There is also a severe lack of preparation in educational organizations and staff to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities, a shortage of qualified and specialized teaching staff, a lack of support and assistance services in schools or kindergartens, and families' inability to enroll their children in schools outside the town due to the high costs of transportation.

5. Access to Higher Education and Vocational and Technical Training for Persons with Disabilities

Persons with disabilities face significant challenges in accessing higher education and vocational training. The most notable challenges include the lack of accessible infrastructure of educational institutions, absence of accessible transportation, and failure to equip lecture halls, workshops, and laboratories to facilitate interaction with the content as required. Moreover, both the curricula and the teaching staff fail to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.

6. Access to Comprehensive Healthcare Services

Despite the availability of a third-level government clinic and several health centers and private clinics in the town, this has not translated into adequate access to necessary healthcare services for persons with disabilities. There is a shortage of some services, such as early disability diagnosis, lack of or insufficient supply of some medications, and the exclusion of physical and occupational therapy services from health insurance. There are also gaps in psychosocial counseling, psychiatric care, vision and hearing rehabilitation services, and a shortage of assistive devices, particularly for hearing disabilities. Furthermore, many persons with disabilities are still not covered by either government or private health insurance due to lack of awareness or various barriers that hinder their enrollment and access to inclusive health coverage.

7. Employment and Economic Empowerment

The majority of persons with disabilities, whether youth, men, or women, are outside the workforce due to: first, the negative societal perception of the capabilities and potential of persons with disabilities, especially women and those with intellectual disabilities; and second, the limited opportunities for youth to enroll in vocational, technical, or higher education, as well as the lack of accommodation in many economic establishments and organizations to employ persons with disabilities. This has contributed to the increase in poverty among these families and a higher dependency ratio.

8. Protection from Violence and Access to Psychosocial Counseling Services

The living conditions of persons with disabilities and their families impose various psychological and social problems, especially for women, and include violence from both inside and outside the family. Additionally, there is a lack of awareness among the families of persons with disabilities regarding their rights to protection and access to services, available measures, and mechanisms for reporting violence and abuse. There is also a lack of effective protection mechanisms in the town, as well as weak psychological, social, and legal counseling services, which exacerbates marginalization, suffering, and the failure to detect cases of violence against persons with disabilities, leading to impunity—especially in the context of a culture of tolerance toward violence and bullying of children, women, and persons with disabilities.

9. Participation in Cultural, Sports, and Recreational Activities

Despite the presence of several active local organizations in women's, charitable, sports, and cultural fields, this has not clearly reflected in the opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate in cultural, sports, and social activities. Most persons with disabilities and their families are keen on involving children and youth with disabilities in these activities. Moreover, the participation of persons with disabilities in shaping organizational policies and interventions, especially for the municipality, and in contributing to the formulation of local development strategy, remains limited.

10. Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Political Life

The participation of persons with disabilities in political life is low due to challenges hindering their active involvement. These challenges include the lack of accessibility in public facilities and voting centers, which is one of the main obstacles to their participation in electoral processes and political activities. Additionally, negative societal perceptions toward persons with disabilities, along with partisan and tribal influences, weaken their participation in political life and decision-making. The lack of awareness among persons with disabilities about their political rights and how to effectively participate deepens the issue, not to mention the deficiency in awareness programs and the absence of accessible media materials.

11. Community Awareness and Interest in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

There is a lack of awareness within the community and among families regarding the rights of persons with disabilities. This is reflected in the community's tendency to approach disability issues from a charitable perspective, often accompanied by attitudes of sympathy rather than recognition of rights. The local culture remains relatively tolerant of the exclusion or marginalization of persons with disabilities across most sectors, and there is limited support, volunteering, and community engagement programs.

12. Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Programs and Services of Local Organizations

Many organizations still approach disability issues from a charitable or welfare perspective, which is tied to an attitude of sympathy. This approach has led to neglecting disability as a human rights issue and resulted in weak visions and interventions by these organizations. This has also led to the absence of policies focused on long-term change to empower persons with disabilities to access various services based on their rights. While there are active local organizations in the field of social development, as well as Surif Municipality, which provides essential services to the population, this has not been effectively reflected in the inclusion and enhancement of the participation of persons with disabilities through a rights-based approach.

13. Community Accountability and Influence on Policies

The lives of persons with disabilities and their families are affected by how well national legislation aligns with the rights of persons with disabilities and how effectively these laws and policies are enforced. This is hindered by a lack of political will, weak tools for community monitoring and accountability, and

limited mobilization and advocacy to influence decision-makers to adopt and implement disability-responsive policies and legislation at both the national and local levels. This undermines the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all sectors, particularly education, health, employment, and social protection programs

5 Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of the profiling document and the final community meeting held in the town of Surif to review and discuss the results and issues, and to come up with recommendations and agree on priorities for action to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities, a set of priority interventions has been identified to improve the situation of persons with disabilities and ensure their inclusion in various aspects of life:

1. Enhancing the Role of the Municipality in Including People with Disabilities:

- Institutionalizing the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the policies and services of Surif Municipality and enhancing their participation in planning processes, policymaking, local development strategies, and decision-making.
- Enhancing access for persons with disabilities and their families to water and energy services at fair and equitable prices, especially for poor households with persons with disabilities. This requires decisions from the municipal council to provide discounted water and electricity for families of persons with disabilities.
- Supporting persons with disabilities and their families, particularly those in poverty or below the poverty line, by exempting them from a reasonable percentage of taxes collected by the municipality (e.g., property tax, waste tax, etc.).
- Adapting and preparing roads, sidewalks, buildings, and public spaces, especially healthcare centers and schools, to facilitate access for persons with different disabilities.
- Strengthening partnerships between the municipality, civil society organizations, international organizations, and private sector organizations to improve the quality of existing services and develop new services, particularly in areas of psychological, social, and legal counseling, vocational training programs, and productive activities to employ persons with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disabilities.

2. Enhancing the Role of Local Organizations in Providing Specialized and Comprehensive Services for Persons with Disabilities:

- Strengthening the role of local organizations in Surif to provide specialized services for persons with disabilities, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, services for severe intellectual disabilities, special education, and provision of assistive tools and medical supplies.
- Raising community awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities, including educating families of persons with disabilities and local community members about their rights and promoting a rights-based developmental approach across various community groups.

- Strengthening the role of local organizations in the protection and community support for persons with disabilities and their families in the town and activating the role of organizations in the referral system between different government organizations and community frameworks to facilitate the transfer of persons with disabilities to related organizations outside the town.
- Working on creating a comprehensive database for persons with disabilities that includes all data related to them and their families, which can be updated and serve as a reference for planning and interventions with people with disabilities. This database should be managed, developed, and updated by the municipality and local organizations to serve as a reference for all organizations within and outside the town.
- Adapting local institution facilities to ensure that persons with disabilities can access them.
- Ensuring the representation of people with disabilities in the administrative and public bodies of local organizations.
- Building the capacity of local organizations on the rights of persons with disabilities, proper conduct when dealing with them, planning inclusive programs and services, advocacy for persons with disabilities, and community accountability.

3. Inclusion in Health Services:

- Providing health and rehabilitation services at local health centers, including occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other specialized services for people with disabilities.
- Simplifying procedures for obtaining health insurance cards and necessary medical referrals.
- Strengthening mental health programs targeted at persons with disabilities and their families.
- Adapting health facilities in the town to ensure access for people with disabilities.

4. Inclusion in Education Services:

- Adapting educational facilities in the town to ensure that children with disabilities can access them.
- Establishing additional resource rooms in schools and rehabilitating and developing existing resource rooms.
- Building the capacity of educational and administrative staff in schools and kindergartens to ensure the inclusion of children with disabilities in education based on an inclusive education approach.
- Working on adapting curricula, teaching methods, educational materials, and providing accessible and inclusive educational resources to ensure equal opportunities for students with disabilities, including in kindergartens.

Implementing awareness programs in schools and kindergartens to promote positive attitudes towards persons with disabilities among students and staff.

5. Inclusion in Employment and Work:

- Influencing the municipality and various organizations in Surif to employ persons with disabilities and provide them with decent work that matches their capabilities and skills, along with necessary accommodations to enable them to perform their jobs efficiently.
- Pressuring official authorities to enforce the Palestinian Labor Law, particularly regarding the employment of persons with disabilities, which mandates that at least 5% of employees in any organization should be persons with disabilities.
- Facilitating access for persons with disabilities to equal opportunities for self-employment to achieve economic independence and enable them to live with dignity.
- Enhancing opportunities for persons with disabilities to access vocational training services or workshops to build their capacities, thus ensuring their inclusion in the labor market.
- Working on providing sustainable entrepreneurial projects that promote self-employment for people with disabilities, preceded by a needs assessment to ensure the provision of projects that match the abilities of persons with disabilities and meet local market demands.

6. Advocacy and Community Accountability:

- Activating community accountability tools to hold the municipality and local organizations accountable for their commitment to including disability in their services, programs, and development plans, including reviewing budgets and assessing their responsiveness to actual needs.
- Organizing community advocacy campaigns based on rights, demanding that official authorities develop and implement legislation and policies related to persons with disabilities and ensure their participation in planning and decision-making processes.
- Advocating for the implementation of the comprehensive government health insurance system for people with disabilities for the year 2021, ensuring the availability of rehabilitation services, medications, supplies, and assistive devices through pressure campaigns directed at the Ministry of Health and relevant authorities.
- Advocating for the implementation of inclusive education policies at the Ministry of Education, including universal design in schools, adapting curricula, teaching methods, building the capacity of teachers, and providing an inclusive educational environment for people with disabilities.
- Organizing campaigns to enhance access to higher education and vocational training for people with disabilities, including adapting the infrastructure of organizations, modifying educational policies, and providing accessible educational materials.
- Strengthening the role of persons with disabilities and their families as key in advocacy and community accountability campaigns, by building their capacity to employ pressure and influence tools, document violations, file complaints, and participate in community initiatives that monitor the performance of organizations and the services provided to people with disabilities at the local level.



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