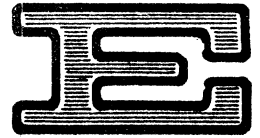




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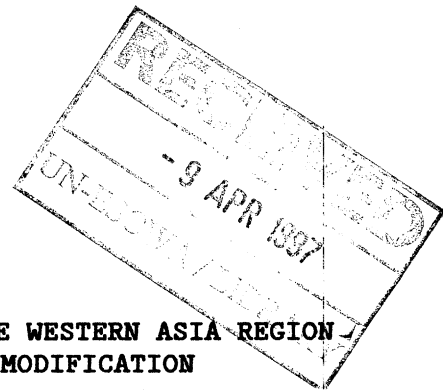


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**SOCIAL ASPECTS OF THE DISABLED IN THE WESTERN ASIA REGION  
AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THEIR MODIFICATION**

by

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CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Summary.....	iv
<u>Chapter</u>	
I. INTRODUCTION: ON THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS....	1
II. WORK OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE DISABLED AND THE TECHNOLOGIES EMPLOYED: THE SITUATION AND THE POTENTIAL.....	3
III. SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF THE DISABLED: THE FAMILY AND THE COMMUNITY.....	13
A. The disabled person and his family.....	13
B. The disabled person and his community.....	17
IV. CONCLUSION: SUGGESTED POLICIES.....	20

Summary

The paper is intended to focus on two basic points: firstly, work opportunities for the disabled and the technologies employed and, secondly, the social integration of disabled persons with respect both to the family and to society. The introduction is concerned with defining the social context and its associations, through an examination of the relationship between the disabled and society as a subject for analysis. The disabled person is a live social entity, lives in society, is affected by it and in turn affects it. Society is a cultural, social, economic and political structure which establishes values and lays down rules of behaviour. An objective treatment of the subject must therefore be based on a recognition of the interaction between the disabled person and the society in which he lives. In other words, the success or failure of any effort in connection with the disabled will be determined by the relationship between the disabled person and society.

If we accept this introduction, there are certain important conclusions, foremost among which is the fact that disability relates to all of society, affects its productive and social forces and is affected by its policies, attitudes and values. It also becomes clear that there is a need to understand the extent to which the social and cultural environment is responsible for creating disability: the response therefore depends on the ability of society to change some of its values, attitudes and practices. Following this introduction, which establishes the thrust of the investigation, the study moves on to discuss the question of work opportunities for the disabled. Here we note the link between work opportunities and the technologies employed, because the enormous technical development registered in recent years has affected the possibilities offered by prosthetic appliances and aids for the disabled. These technologies make it easier to put the remaining abilities of a disabled person to good use and increase his chances of obtaining employment. International and regional papers on the disabled have for this reason focused on work opportunities and the development of appropriate technology for the disabled. The discussion refers to Arab legislation and the extent to which work for the disabled is guaranteed. It is noted that, in most bodies of legislation, such provisions are dispersed among the laws relating to labour, young people, social welfare and insurance whilst some Arab countries (such as Iraq and Egypt) have striven to combine the separate elements of these laws into an integrated piece of legislation designed to protect the disabled. While some laws prescribe that a certain quota of disabled persons must be employed, other Arab bodies of legislation (that of Jordan, for example) do not oblige employers to hire the disabled.

While recognizing the importance of Arab legislation in establishing the disabled person's right to work, it is also important to follow up the real opportunities for such work. Here the discussion moves on to focus on the practical aspects of employment for the disabled, and three questions are raised in this connection. The first is how to ensure that the disabled are rehabilitated for the labour market, i.e. the institutional contexts for such rehabilitation. The second seeks to identify those work opportunities which

have been provided to them, and the principal problems and obstacles, while the third endeavours to assess the specific technology made available to the disabled. On the basis of examples from Arab countries, the discussion concludes that there is a need for both quantitative and qualitative improvement in rehabilitation centres in order to meet the actual requirements of current markets. It also mentions a number of problems faced by the disabled in their work, particularly in view of the figures which suggest a relatively low employment rate. The most important problems include work which is inappropriate for the circumstances of the disabled person, a lack of response on the part of employers and difficulties relating to access and mobility. The discussion finally addresses the ineffectiveness and poor performance of prosthetic appliances and the failure to develop appropriate technology at a reasonable price for the disabled.

The second area of concern in the discussion - social integration of the disabled - is addressed through an analysis of the disabled person and his family, on the one hand, and of the disabled person and the community, on the other. Modern thinking on rehabilitation has it that the family must bear the major burden in processes of rehabilitation, meaning that the disabled person's family must be educated and trained in order to be successful in integrating him and in responding to his needs and problems. The family also bears the primary responsibility for meeting the basic requirements of its disabled members and has the major task of ensuring early detection and limitation of the disability. Here it is noted that institutions caring for the disabled have a responsibility to maintain regular contact with their families, and mention is made of the possibilities made available through preventive medicine and centres for the welfare of mothers, children and families. Reference is made, lastly, to the responsibility of the media in addressing both the Arab family and the disabled individual.

With regard to the relationship between the disabled person and the community as a whole, his integration into the community can be ensured only if he is accepted and perceived as an active and productive member of that society. Efforts to change society's attitudes to the disabled are of fundamental importance for the success of social rehabilitation in the broad sense, and for the disabled person's participation in the life of the community. The educational system ranks as a major instrument in such endeavours, and sports and cultural activities also constitute means whereby the disabled person may be enabled to participate in the community. Finally, the media and non-governmental organizations have significant roles to play in facilitating the process of social integration. In addressing these points, the study cites positive examples from certain Arab countries, which must be promoted and given attention in order to broaden their effect.

The conclusion is that the proposed policies for integration of the disabled into society should not be confined only to legislative policy, but should extend to policies relating to education, information, science and technology. The institutions of civilian society should also be mobilized to deal with the issue.



## I. INTRODUCTION: ON THE SOCIAL CONTEXT AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS

This study presents an analysis of the principal relationship determining both the present and the future of the disabled in Arab society, i.e. the relationship between the disabled person and society. A disabled person, like any human being, lives within society, which he affects and which is affected by him. Society is a cultural, social, economic and political structure which establishes values, forms attitudes and lays down rules of behaviour. By means of public policies, it specifies objectives and programmes and allocates resources. Thus, objective treatment of the subject of the disabled must be based on a recognition of the interaction between the disabled person and the society in which he lives and to which he belongs. We can therefore say that the success or failure of any effort in connection with the disabled is determined and governed by this interaction between the two.

Some important primary conclusions may be drawn from this introduction:

1. Interaction with the disabled must not be determined on a partial basis but fully and completely. Fragmentation of the issues and their separation from the overall issues of society would result in preservation of the status quo. Disability relates to all of society, affects its productive and social forces and is affected by its policies, attitudes and values.

2. The extent to which the social and cultural environment is responsible for creating disability must be recognized. It is also no coincidence that disability tends to be more prevalent in rural than in urban areas. Research and studies have shown the links between disability, the type of upbringing and certain cultural and social practices, particularly the practice known as "closed marriage".

3. While some of the reasons for disability lie in the nature of the social and cultural environment, the extent to which this phenomenon is addressed depends on society's ability to change some of its values, attitudes and social and cultural practices. This represents a major challenge, which must be taken up from the outset.

4. Acceptance of the relationship between the disabled person and society in the course of our discussion of the social context of the disabled in Arab society obliges us to change our emotional approach to the subject. This means that we must, in our interaction with the disabled, go beyond the realm of charity, compassion and humanitarian feelings and embrace a logic which emphasizes justice, equality and equalization of opportunities. We must therefore treat the problem as a social issue which concerns all of society, affects society and is affected by it, and is thus one of the responsibilities of a modern State.

These four conclusions, which arise from the nature of the interaction between the disabled person and society, both determine and explain the features of the social context of the disabled in Arab society. They also highlight the lines of thinking adopted in this research paper.

In the pages which follow, this paper analyses the social context of the disabled in Arab society by concentrating on two principal areas of concern:

1. Work opportunities for the disabled and the technologies employed: the situation and the potential.

2. Social integration of the disabled: the family and society.

Before addressing these two areas in detail, some fundamental observations should be made:

1. The first observation relates to the concept of disability and the extent to which it is homogeneous. Although the phenomenon is referred to by one word, the concept of a "disabled person" or "disability" embraces disparate categories and groups. There is mental impairment, sensory impairment and physical impairment, and there are also degrees in the level of disability before it becomes total. The definition adopted by the United Nations in the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons,<sup>1/</sup> refers to handicap as "a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or disability, that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal, depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors, for that individual".

2. The second observation relates to the practical and scientific difficulties involved in defining the concept of disability in the Arab region. Among the principal difficulties is the absence of precise statistical surveys in many Arab countries. In some of these countries, indeed, the problem is ignored, whether unintentionally or deliberately. The striking thing is that no comprehensive field research has been carried out to identify categories of disability, and census questionnaires have not in the past included an objective endeavour<sup>2/</sup> to obtain detailed data on the subject. They concentrate for the most part on a single variety of disability, namely mental disability, while the subject of physical disability is marked by considerable confusion.<sup>3/</sup> The situation is further complicated by the fact that Arab countries differ as to how they determine the nature of disability and define partial or total disability. Finally, official data concerning the number of disabled persons in certain Arab countries is based on records of those in contact with the State, i.e. those at welfare institutions and rehabilitation centres, and it is very difficult to list those

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<sup>1/</sup> United Nations, World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (New York, 1981).

<sup>2/</sup> Data of this sort, if included in a census questionnaire, are based on the responses of the family itself. The result therefore depends on the extent to which such families perceive and appreciate the disability. Evidently, some tend to ignore the existence of the disability or have a sense of shame or disgrace with respect to it, etc. This affects the credibility of the data.

<sup>3/</sup> For further details, see Uthman Faraj, "Factors causing disability and programmes of prevention in the Gulf region", Seminar on the welfare of the disabled in the Arab Gulf States (November 1981), p. 29.



disabled persons who are not registered, although they are proportionately very numerous. Taken together, all these difficulties make it necessary to exercise a degree of restraint and caution in accepting some of the declared official assessments. Although the Arab Declaration on Work with the Disabled<sup>1/</sup> suggested that the overall number of disabled in Arab States be assessed at 15 million, the real total may well be much higher. We should not ignore the past and continuing effect of wars in the region, which provide basic fodder for disability figures in the Arab States in general, and particularly in the ESCWA region.<sup>2/</sup>

3. The third and final observation relates to the interaction between the study's two principal areas of concern: work opportunities, on the one hand, and social integration, on the other. Modern thinking on social rehabilitation of the disabled tends to address the two areas in a single context. Rehabilitation is a co-ordinated and integrated process, making use of medical, social, educational and rehabilitative measures in conjunction, to help a disabled person to attain the maximum possible level of effectiveness and integration into society.<sup>3/</sup> This means that the thinking on work is part of a more comprehensive line of thinking, designed to integrate the disabled person into society and to increase his level of participation. This is something which does not come about automatically but as a result of educating society and making it aware of the need to work with the disabled. If this is not done, legislation affirming the right of disabled persons to work is meaningless and devoid of sense.

## II. WORK OPPORTUNITIES AND THE TECHNOLOGIES EMPLOYED: THE SITUATION AND THE POTENTIAL

The issue of work opportunities for the disabled is linked to that of the technologies employed. The explanation for this lies in the enormous technical development registered in recent years, as reflected in the possibilities offered by prosthetic appliances and aids for the disabled. In this connection, the technologies employed make it easier to put the remaining abilities of a disabled person to good use and increase his chances of obtaining employment.

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1/ Arab Declaration on Work with the Disabled, Kuwait Regional Conference on the Disabled (Kuwait, April 1981), p. 4.

2/ Among the principal regional and civil wars to which the region has been and continues to be subjected are the Arab-Israeli war, the struggle of the Palestinian people for its legitimate rights, the Iraq-Iran war and the civil war in Lebanon.

3/ Charter for the 1980s concerning the Prevention of Disability and Rehabilitation, 14th International Conference on Vocational Rehabilitation (Canada, June 1980), p. 4.

Most international and regional papers on the subject of the disabled have focused on work opportunities. The reference to equality and the equalization of opportunities in the World Programme of Action means that education and employment opportunities must be made available to the disabled. It also means that they should be provided with the social and health-related services which allow them to participate in the building of society because "what is required is to focus on the ability, not on the disability of disabled persons".<sup>1/</sup> The Arab Declaration on Work with the Disabled also stresses the principle of equal rights and the equalization of opportunities. Among the basic ideas expressed in that document is the recognition of all disabled persons' right to welfare, education and work, without discrimination on the basis of sex, origin, social status or political affiliation.<sup>2/</sup> Work, then, in relation to education and training, is a fundamental criterion by which to determine the effectiveness of the principle of equalization of opportunities, as it is actually applied. In the context of attention to the work of disabled persons and opportunities for their employment, a United Nations paper has highlighted another aspect - the employment of disabled women. Although opportunities for women in third world societies are generally limited, with respect to both education and work, the work opportunities of disabled Arab women are expected to diminish. This aspect must be addressed and publicized, to the extent that data is available. Employment legislation and the extent to which statistical data is available on employment of the disabled occupy an important position among indicators of the status of the disabled in different States. The study will endeavour to highlight this in order to provide an objective assessment of real work opportunities for the disabled.

Concern over work for the disabled is not based simply on notions of equality and the equalization of opportunities but, basically, on economic and productive considerations. Transformation of the disabled person into a productive member of the work-force means a gain in terms of production and a reduction in the burden of care that has to be assumed by his family and the State. The State's expenditure on centres for the education and training of the disabled thus produces an economic return. In some communities, moreover, disability constitutes a source of tensions and social problems. In Egypt, for example, research indicates that disabled persons have turned to begging and perversion and, since disability is linked to poverty, some members of the group have joined the ranks of the young homeless.<sup>3/</sup>

Employment of the disabled is thus more a social and economic necessity than a psychological and humanitarian necessity. This is an idea which must be highlighted and emphasized, particularly as some voices are raised in demands that priority in employment should be accorded to the non-disabled.

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<sup>1/</sup> United Nations, World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (New York, 1981), p. 7.

<sup>2/</sup> Arab Declaration on Work with the Disabled, Kuwait Regional Conference on the Disabled (Kuwait, April 1981), p. 6.

<sup>3/</sup> "Disabled persons and Egyptian society", unpublished study presented at the Comprehensive Social Survey of Egyptian Society, National Centre for Social and Criminological Research (Cairo, 1980), p. 20.

Reference is made in particular to Egyptian society, where there is a serious unemployment crisis and it is difficult to speak of giving work to the disabled while non-disabled individuals are unemployed. Here, the question arises: to which of the two should the State address itself?<sup>1/</sup> This is a very serious question, and the answer must be based not only on the logic of equality and the equalization of opportunities but on that of the economic and social returns and of the economic benefits. The starting-point for discussion of work opportunities for the disabled is Arab legislation and the extent to which it provides guarantees for the protection of the disabled. The resolutions and laws certainly constitute a minimum response to the issue and also refer to the responsibilities of Governments. The legislation extends to work, education, rehabilitation, training and services, etc. Although it is true that a gap exists between what is in place and what should be there, the legislative structure does, in the final analysis, constitute a legal basis for addressing the problem. It is also this structure which establishes what is meant by a disabled person, what his rights are, what rehabilitation programmes are designed for his benefit, the extent to which he is employed in offices and public institutions and other details which determine the features of his life and activity.

Arab legislation concerning the disabled is dispersed among various subjects. Thus, there are some clauses in labour law which provide for the employment of a certain quota of disabled persons and there are other provisions which relate to disabled juveniles, in addition to clauses contained in laws on social welfare, security and insurance. Exceptions to this general trend may be seen in certain Arab countries (such as Iraq and Egypt) which have endeavoured to combine the scattered elements of these laws into integrated legislation designed to protect the disabled. An example of the dispersal of such laws may be seen in the situation of disabled persons under Kuwaiti legislation, where there is no special law to cover them. However, the Kuwaiti legislator accords them special treatment in civil matters (Law No. 4 of 1974 concerning the administration of palace affairs and Law No. 5 of 1959 concerning the registration of immovable property) and in criminal matters (articles 22, 166, 178, 179 and 191). There are other legal clauses governing the provision of assistance and insurance. Reference is made in particular to Law No. 5 of 1968, as amended by Law No. 30 of 1971, concerning public assistance, which provides that "assistance shall continue to be provided until such time as the disabled person is rehabilitated or is trained to such a level that he is capable of providing for himself".<sup>2/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> Seminar organized by the Arab Centre for Research on Development and the Future (Cairo, 18 November 1988), participants being Uthman Faraj, Qadri Hafni, Sayyid Yasin, Ali al-Din Hilal, Najwa Hafiz and Amani Qandil.

<sup>2/</sup> Manal Mansur Buhamid, The Disabled, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (Kuwait, 1985), pp. 183-189.

Among the positive features of Arab countries' attitudes to the disabled is their endeavour to adopt integrated legislation in that connection.<sup>1/</sup> The proposed Kuwaiti draft law includes advances with respect to the machinery of protection, providing as it does for the imposition of penalties ranging from imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months to a fine of up to 200 Kuwaiti dinars, or one of the two, in cases where the employer or person responsible refuses to employ a disabled person, and for the imposition of criminal penalties in cases where the person responsible is neglectful of welfare in fulfilling his obligations to the disabled person.<sup>2/</sup>

The same situation may be seen in the Sultanate of Oman, where there are no special legislative provisions or laws covering the disabled but clauses relating to them contained in the laws on social security, low-cost housing and labour. Omani law does, however, provide for the employment of disabled persons with certain abilities and obliges employers to give 2 per cent of jobs to disabled workers.<sup>3/</sup> Jordanian legislation contains no provisions obliging employers to give work to the disabled but there are legislative proposals to this effect which have not yet been put into practice. In Bahrain, 1976 saw the adoption of a law concerning the employment of rehabilitated disabled persons which obliged employers of 100 or more workers to ensure that 2 per cent of their work-forces consisted of disabled persons. It also empowered the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs to decide in which Government posts and occupations priority should be accorded to the disabled. Under Iraqi law, the State and the public and mixed sectors are obliged to employ disabled persons, and if the disabled person refuses to work he is deprived of his family welfare allowance until such time as he agrees to do so.<sup>4/</sup>

Egyptian law reflects an endeavour to organize the affairs of the disabled and to protect them by means of a single body of legislation which was previously dispersed among the laws on labour (Labour Law No. 92 of 1959), social security (Law No. 116 of 1950), rehabilitation (Law No. 14 of 1959), health, insurance, etc. Social Rehabilitation Law No. 39 was adopted in 1975, combining the scattered elements of its articles in a single law concerning the social rehabilitation of the disabled. This was followed by the adoption of

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1/ The Manila Conference of 1978 addressed important recommendations to countries of the world concerning rehabilitation of the disabled, the adoption of legislation for their protection and the guaranteeing of work opportunities for them.

2/ Badriyyah al-Awadi, "Legal guarantees for the protection of disabled persons", The Disabled, periodical published by the Kuwait Society for the Welfare of the Disabled, No. 18 (Kuwait, 1987), pp. 34-35.

3/ The situation of disabled persons in the Arab world, report of the secretariat of the League of Arab States (Tunis, 1980), pp. 14-15.

4/ Ibid., p. 12.

a series of successive ministerial decisions designating posts in the Government and the public sector. The Egyptian law provides that every disabled person is entitled to rehabilitation (art. 3) and obliges employers with 50 or more workers to ensure that five per cent of their work-forces consists of disabled persons proposed, *inter alia*, by the Ministry of Manpower (art. 9). It also allocates to disabled persons who obtain rehabilitation certificates a quota of five per cent of all posts in the administrative apparatus of the State, public authorities, public institutions and economic units governed by them (art. 10), and prescribes that those who violate its provisions should be subject to fines or imprisonment (art. 16).<sup>1/</sup>

While the general trends in Arab legislation concerning the disabled, particularly with respect to the right to work, range from specific legal recognition, or the inclusion of general provisions concerning rehabilitation, to some cases of neglect of legal protection, the question is whether the legal position is reflected in terms of reality, i.e. whether legal recognition of the disabled person's right to work is reflected in the provision to him of real work opportunities.

A realistic investigation of work opportunities for disabled persons reveals that such opportunities are limited and subject to a number of constraints that must be addressed directly. In this respect, the law has not been able to protect the work opportunities of disabled persons, the situation in the final analysis being the same in most countries of the region, both in those where the law clearly guarantees the disabled person's right to work and in those which have no special law covering the disabled or where legislation concerning the disabled is dispersed.

In order to bring out the practical aspects of work opportunities for the disabled, we have to answer three questions:

1. How can the disabled be rehabilitated for the labour market, and in what institutional contexts?
2. What are the work opportunities that have been established for them, and what are the most important problems and obstacles?
3. To what extent is specific technology available to the disabled, and how effective is it?

With respect to rehabilitation of the disabled for the labour market, the general trend in the Arab countries reveals two approaches, the first through general and higher education and the second through centres for the rehabilitation of the disabled or special training schools governed by the ministry responsible for education. Because of the differences in sources of rehabilitation, education and training, the institutional framework governing the provision of work opportunities to the disabled is concentrated within the

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<sup>1/</sup> The fine is not exceed 30 Egyptian pounds and imprisonment is not to exceed one month. Previously, the law established a quota of 3 per cent of jobs for the disabled. See Law No. 39 of 1975 concerning rehabilitation of the disabled.

ministry responsible for social affairs and labour. In most of the Gulf States, the two are combined within a single ministry, which presides over rehabilitation in the broad sense and over the provision of work opportunities,<sup>1/</sup> while we have another example in the case of Egypt, where social affairs are handled by one ministry and labour or manpower by another. This means that responsibility for rehabilitation and labour is fragmented and divided among a number of institutions. Some experts and officials<sup>2/</sup> consider this institutional separation - between the authority which presides over rehabilitation and that which presides over employment - to be "the greatest mistake, doing harm to the disabled and negatively affecting their work opportunities".

Although we have no precise information as to the percentage of disabled persons who have benefited from rehabilitation services and actually worked, certain indicators do confirm the limited scope of rehabilitation centres and offices in Arab countries, and thus the limited number of beneficiaries. Meanwhile, rehabilitation for the purposes of work has for many years been carried out in a traditional manner, without being adapted to the circumstances and requirements of either the disabled person or the market. What is striking is that the idea of creating work opportunities for the disabled person in the context of society as a whole is either non-existent or limited. Often work for the disabled is restricted to what he does in the rehabilitation centre itself, without his being integrated - in terms of production and society - into a broader framework; and some of the negative features of work in such centres should be highlighted.

In most Arab countries there is a severe shortage of trained personnel capable of training the disabled and of working with them. Sometimes nationals of the country decline to work in such a field, and Asian and Arab migrant workers become primarily responsible for such tasks.<sup>3/</sup> In other cases shortages of funds constitute a major constraint on the level and extent of services.<sup>4/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> This is the case in, for example, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

<sup>2/</sup> Abd al-Salam al-Banna, Under-Secretary for Rehabilitation at the Ministry of Social Affairs, in an interview with the author (Cairo, 28 November 1988).

<sup>3/</sup> This situation is particularly prevalent in Kuwait, where rehabilitation centres and institutions for the care of the disabled rely on migrant labour either because of a shortage of specialized national staff or because nationals decline to work in this field, or for both these reasons.

<sup>4/</sup> The effect of funding shortages on institutions working with the disabled is particularly evident in Egypt.

Some information concerning employment of the disabled in Egypt indicates that work opportunities are provided through the Ministry of Manpower to an average of 1,500 disabled persons each year,<sup>1/</sup> which is a low figure by comparison with the total number of disabled individuals with university degrees, intermediate diplomas or rehabilitation certificates. Certificates were obtained from rehabilitation centres and offices by 5,873 disabled persons in 1986.<sup>2/</sup> It is clear, if we compare this number with the number of disabled persons who obtained posts in the work-force in 1986 (1,553),<sup>3/</sup> that the rate of employment is extremely low.<sup>4/</sup>

Given the absence of comprehensive detailed information on the disabled and their social, educational and economic position, as well as the variable of sex (male/female), it is difficult to draw any general conclusions concerning trends in their employment and the work opportunities which are offered to them. However, it can be stated that the number of those actually employed is low in relation to the total number of disabled persons registered with the Ministry of Manpower. Furthermore, the years following the war of October 1973 saw an increase in the rate at which disabled persons were employed, as a result of war-related operations in both the State apparatus and the private sector. Thus, the employment situation varied in accordance with changing circumstances.

While we have in the preceding passage given a general indication of the employment situation for the disabled, showing that there are difficulties and problems with regard to the employment of individuals in this category, it is important to identify the nature of these difficulties. In addressing the factors which restrict the employment of the disabled, we shall rely on the results of a major field study carried out recently in Egypt on a sample of 525 disabled persons, all of whom had recently undergone rehabilitation. Some had obtained university degrees or intermediate diplomas, while others had

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1/ Abd al-Salam Banna, interview with the author.

2/ To these should be added some 1,019 disabled persons who obtained rehabilitation certificates in respect of an earlier period. Source: Statistical Indicators on Social Welfare, Annual Report of the Ministry of Social Affairs 1986-1987, Arab Republic of Egypt (1988), p. 201.

3/ Ibid., table, p. 204.

4/ Manpower offices employed 3 per cent of the disabled persons registered with them between 1973 and 1979, for a total of 19,007. The highest rate of employment was among production workers (66 per cent), followed by clerical (20 per cent), services (5 per cent) and technical and practical vocations (2 per cent). Unpublished report on the situation of special categories, Comprehensive Social Survey, National Centre for Social and Criminological Research (Cairo, 1980), p. 530.

been awarded training completion certificates by rehabilitation offices.<sup>1/</sup> The results, particularly those based on in-depth interviews, showed a lack of follow-up by experts in the rehabilitation of the disabled, despite the disabled person's need for such follow-up for the purposes of attaining psychological and social conformity and sustaining his work. Half of those surveyed in the sample suffered from instability in their work, for various reasons: some because of a deterioration in their health, others because of low wages, while yet others mentioned mobility problems and difficulties in travelling from home to their place of work.<sup>2/</sup> 20.7 per cent of the sample stated that the tools and equipment which they used were not suitable for them, while half of those surveyed said that the training they had received was appropriate for work with such tools and equipment.<sup>3/</sup>

The results of the study also indicated that irregularity in the work of some of those surveyed was due to the absence of any work that was appropriate to the training they had received. This confirms the need to develop the training of disabled persons and to prepare them to respond to the labour market in a modern and economical manner: this can be done by studying the market, its supply and demand trends and those professions which are in demand.<sup>4/</sup>

The proportion of disabled persons among those surveyed who were working in professions for which they were not prepared amounted to some 18 per cent, while 36.1 per cent said that the period of their training had been insufficient and that they required further training.<sup>5/</sup>

In the course of an attempt to research and identify the reasons for the low rate in the rate of employment of the disabled, it became clear that some employment sectors did not comply with the requirement to employ such individuals. In many cases, the private sector refrained from providing employment opportunities to disabled persons and treated the employment quota as a hindrance.<sup>6/</sup> Thus - as noted by one of the expert officials - it is easy to dodge the quota established by law (5 per cent) for employment of the

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<sup>1/</sup> Report discussing factors which limit the employment of newly rehabilitated disabled persons, Association of Institutions for the Welfare of Special Categories and the Disabled, unpublished report, Arab Republic of Egypt (1988).

<sup>2/</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>3/</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>4/</sup> Seminar organized by the Arab Centre for Research on Development and the Future.

<sup>5/</sup> Report discussing factors which limit the employment of newly rehabilitated disabled persons, Association of Institutions for the Welfare of Special Categories and the Disabled, unpublished report, Arab Republic of Egypt (1988), p. 32.

<sup>6/</sup> Ibid., p. 40.



disabled. This highlights "the need to rehabilitate society as a whole towards work with the disabled, and the need to establish contact with employment organizations and employers".<sup>1/</sup>

It is clear that there are many different factors which limit the employment of disabled persons, including the distance travelled to work, mobility problems, low wages, the refusal of society and the employment sectors to comply with the law concerning employment of the disabled, a lack of follow-up by the labour office and rehabilitation experts, differences in levels and types of rehabilitation for work and a shortage of employment opportunities in the market. All these factors confirm the importance, on the one hand, of field research and the variables and conditions which such research reveals and, on the other, of a comprehensive response based on integrated social policies.

Last but not least, we should note the importance of the role played by technology in providing prosthetic appliances and aids for the disabled. Just as this field draws on expertise in the social sciences for work with the disabled and their preparation for a role in society, the world has also seen much use made of technological developments on behalf of the disabled. While science and technology have achieved outstanding results in the treatment and rehabilitation of disabled persons and in the development of aids which promote their integration and participation in society, the situation indicates that little use is made by disabled persons in the Arab world of such technology. The principal reason is that "Arab countries rely on their own individual efforts to import some of these technologies; obviously, they are expensive and their production locally requires support from the Arab market if they are to be provided at reasonable prices within the means of the disabled".<sup>2/</sup> It should be noted that there is a newly-established Egyptian national association, known as the "Egyptian Association for Artificial Limbs and Prosthetic Appliances", which includes among its objectives an increase in the production of aids and prosthetic appliances for the disabled. This represents a positive trend in national efforts.<sup>3/</sup>

There are factories which make artificial limbs in some Arab countries, some of which employ disabled persons, but their production may not meet the needs of the local market and may require modernization and updating if they are to conform to world developments. The Armed Forces Rehabilitation Centre

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<sup>1/</sup> Abd al-Salam Banna, Under-Secretary for Rehabilitation at the Ministry of Social Affairs, an interview with the author.

<sup>2/</sup> Abd al-Salam Banna, in an interview concerning technological developments in the world of the disabled. A modern artificial hand, for example, could cost more than 10,000 Egyptian pounds, and an artificial knee about 18,000 Egyptian pounds.

<sup>3/</sup> The Association, most of whose members are specialist physicians, was founded in 1980 and is chaired by Dr. Abd al-Salam Banna.

at Cairo, one of the oldest rehabilitation centres in the Arab region, contains a factory which makes artificial limbs and prosthetic appliances and is used both by the military and by civilians. However, it has not been updated and renovated over the past 35 years in a manner consistent with its functions. As a result, a decision was recently taken by the Egyptian Minister of Defence to allocate \$3 million for the construction of a new centre.<sup>1/</sup>

The other important point in connection with the uses of technology relates to the applications of computers in facilitating the daily living conditions of the disabled, and their extension to the fields of education, training and employment. This is a sphere which has not up to now been explored by the Arab countries. Apart from the seminar organized by ESCWA - in conjunction with the Iraqi Centre for Electronic Research and Computers, the Iraqi Centre for the Welfare of those Disabled Veterans and the UNESCO Regional Office, Arab experts and specialized public opinion have not yet taken note of computer applications for the benefit of the disabled.<sup>2/</sup> Despite the keenness of education colleges in most Arab countries to make use of computers for educational purposes, they have not, for the most part, shown any inclination to use them on behalf of the disabled.

In Egypt, for example, where there are more than 11 training colleges, there is no specialized programme for the education of the disabled or for the training of teachers and supervisors in welfare and vocational rehabilitation institutions.<sup>3/</sup> Universities with an interest in rehabilitation engineering also show only limited initiatives in developing prosthetic appliances for the disabled. Among positive initiatives are the efforts undertaken by the College of Engineering at the University of Zagazig.<sup>4/</sup> However, it is in the end a matter of individual initiatives, which require planning, organization and support from social policies. Thus we are bound in the final analysis to affirm the link between the issue of the disabled and other issues relating to society, as well as the link between success in confronting the issue and the ability and awareness of society and its institutions taken together.

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<sup>1/</sup> Brigadier Ahmad Nabil Mas'ud, Director of the Association of Veterans and War Victims, interview with the author (Cairo, 12 November 1988).

<sup>2/</sup> The seminar, which was attended by 150 Arab and international experts, was held at Baghdad from 4 to 6 May 1987.

<sup>3/</sup> Seminar organized by the Arab Centre for Research on Development and the Future.

<sup>4/</sup> Al-Ahram (Cairo, 6 May 1986).

### III. SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF THE DISABLED: THE FAMILY AND THE COMMUNITY

The concept of social integration of the disabled is based on the concepts of participation, equality and the equalization of opportunities, and full participation in the basic units of society - the family, social groups and the local community - is the essence of human experience. The right to equality of opportunity for such participation is set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "... but disabled persons are often denied the opportunities of full participation in the activities of the socio-cultural system of which they are a part. This deprivation comes about through physical and social barriers that have evolved from ignorance, indifference and fear." It is thus that the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons describes the difficulties of integrating the disabled into the community, evoking the responsibility of society as a whole, and its social policies, to accept the disabled as basic partners in all aspects of the life of the community, as well as the future of the relationship between society and the disabled.<sup>1/</sup>

We may discuss the concept of social integration on two levels. The first, which is narrow, concerns the nature of the relationship between the disabled person and his family, while the second, which is broad, concerns the nature of the relationship between him and the community as a whole and the extent to which the community accepts the disabled person's participation with respect to production, society, culture and sport.

#### A. The disabled person and his family

Before discussing the preparation of the disabled person's family for interaction with him, it is important to note that this step should be preceded by another fundamental step, that of preparing the disabled person psychologically and socially for adaptation to his family, in accordance with the physical and mental constraints to which he is subject. Many studies have highlighted the psychological condition of the disabled person, concentrating for the most part on his lack of self-confidence, and the resulting conflicts in his attempts to assert himself. One of the major points revealed by these studies is that the presence or absence of an inferiority complex in the disabled person depends basically on the way in which he is treated by his family, particularly in his early years.<sup>2/</sup> The attitude of the family to its disabled child supports the trend in modern thinking on rehabilitation which asserts that the disabled should not be isolated from their families and that the family should bear a greater share of the burden of the rehabilitation process. Since not all families share the same level of culture and awareness

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<sup>1/</sup> World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, p. 19.

<sup>2/</sup> Ali Muhammad Matar, "The psychological condition of the disabled", Seminar on the welfare of the disabled in the Arab Gulf States, p. 7.

of methods of education and upbringing, particularly with respect to their disabled children, it is necessary to educate them and to prepare them psychologically to work with their children. We may distinguish the following tendencies in interaction between families and their disabled children:<sup>1/</sup>

1. A tendency to reject, caused by the family's feeling of guilt, anxiety or inability to play the role expected of it for one reason or another. The role of specialists or institutions for the welfare of the disabled is therefore of importance: they have to reduce the burden on such parents, offer them opportunities to rid themselves of guilt feelings and encourage them to share responsibility for channelling the remaining abilities of the disabled person.

2. A damaging tendency to pamper to excess, which implants in the disabled child a feeling of deficiency and the hopelessness of acquiring expertise. Here also an important role can be played by psychological and social specialists with respect to organization of the relationship between the disabled person and his parents.

3. A tendency to deny, even to the extent of denying the existence of the disability and attempting to treat the condition as if it were natural. This does further damage to the position of the disabled person and requires intervention on the part of specialists.

4. A pessimistic tendency, in which the family loses hope of an improvement in the condition of the disabled person and so becomes subject to increased psychological pressure. Here the family requires outside intervention on the part of a specialist, who can make it aware of the true situation and the possibilities for developing the disabled person's abilities.

5. A tendency to withdraw, whereby families refrain from speaking of their disabled members, never referring to them for reasons of shame and embarrassment. This tendency affects the growth of their disabled children and also requires treatment on a self-help basis.

These diverse types of families, given the differences in their educational, social and economic levels, adopt various attitudes towards their disabled children. This variety highlights the need of such families for scientific information on their children's condition and development, as well as the need for them to be aware of the valuable role which they can play in relation to their children, by interacting with the situation without embarrassment or shame. In addition, it is the family which bears the primary responsibility for meeting the basic requirements of its disabled members. This role depends on both the condition of the disabled person, and the social and economic position of his family. This is another factor which confirms the importance of increasing the family's awareness and of providing it with information. How well or badly the family plays its role has a direct effect on the situation of the disabled person and the possibilities for his participation in the life of the community. The third important point which

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<sup>1/</sup> Jamil Tawfiq, "Categories of disabled persons, their psychological and physical characteristics and the role of the disabled in society", Seminar on the welfare of the disabled in the Arab Gulf States, pp. 52-55.

draws attention to the role of the family is the nature of its relationship to the school.<sup>1/</sup> It is by means of this relationship that certain cases of disability (slowness to learn, deafness, speaking disabilities, impaired vision, etc.) may be detected at an early stage. The absence of such a relationship and a family's unawareness of its importance tends to exacerbate the disability. The fourth and final point which makes it particularly important to deal with the family is the role of the family in limiting disability. It is important to detect the disability at an early stage or to limit it, by beginning prevention before treatment. If we briefly review the reasons for disability in the Arab countries, we find that the social and cultural factors include some which are directly linked to the role of the family, such as the way in which the family brings up its children. Excessive pampering and the leaving of children in the case of foreign nursemaids, particularly in the Gulf region, have produced negative results with respect to the child's psychological and social growth. The country study on the United Arab Emirates revealed that the psychological and linguistic development of such children had been impaired, so buttressing one of the social mainstays of disability.<sup>2/</sup> One must also consider the effect on a disabled person of being deprived of love and care. At Kuwait's Institution for the Care of the Disabled, which in 1985 had 218 inmates, 41 proved to be subject to difficult social conditions (no family, or the separation of father from mother). It also turned out that 71 of the inmates had four or more older siblings; this indicates that they were relatively deprived of care and attention and also confirms the importance of the family's role in limiting disability. Reference was also made to the high rate of disability caused by household accidents occurring in the family context.<sup>3/</sup>

If the above factors, taken together, demonstrate the importance of the family's role in integrating the disabled person, either by limiting the disability or through interaction with the reality of such disability, the major question is how to deal with the family and to support its role in the social integration of the disabled person.

There are a number of means and instruments available to us, the basic objective of which is to provide information to the family and thus to ensure a greater degree of awareness in interaction with disability. Among the most

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<sup>1/</sup> Samirah Abu Zayd, Proposed programme for the upbringing of disabled children such as to limit disability, research paper submitted to the Conference on the Limitation of Disability, Association of Institutions for the Care of Special Categories and the Disabled, Arab Republic of Egypt (6-8 December 1988), pp. 4-5.

<sup>2/</sup> Results and indicators from the United Arab Emirates country study, Scientific encounter to study the effect of foreign nursemaids on features of the Arab family in the Gulf, Council of the Ministry of Labour for Social Affairs in the Gulf States, Follow-up Office (Al-Manamah, 1986), pp. 10-24.

<sup>3/</sup> Annual Report for 1985, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Department of Planning and Follow-up, State of Kuwait (1986), p. 43.

important of these means is the role which may be played by institutions for the care of the disabled through contacts with their families. Despite the logic and the simplicity of this role, most such institutions do not maintain a continuous relationship with families of the disabled. There are many reasons, including a lack of awareness on the part of the disabled person's family and its unwillingness to maintain such contact, a lack of understanding on the part of those running the institution of the importance of contacts with the families of disabled persons or a high proportion of inmates in relation to the responsible technical staff.<sup>1/</sup> Among the positive steps being taken by the Association for the Disabled in Kuwait are the organization of meetings with the families of the disabled and its moves to encourage regular visits by child inmates to their families. It also supervises the preparation of meetings between doctors and specialists, on the one hand, and the family, on the other, at one of its clubs (the Kuwait Club for the Disabled).<sup>2/</sup>

Another important means is to make use of the possibilities offered by preventive medicine, either through a general physician or through mother-, child- and family-care centres. These centres must be used to concentrate on the preventive aspect of disability, with a view to reducing such disability. This field continues to enjoy only limited recognition, despite the positive possibilities which it offers. Some pioneer experiments are being carried out in Oman and Saudi Arabia. In Oman, a programme has been arranged for the development of rural society, with care of the disabled included among its objectives. A young man and a young woman enjoying the trust of each village were selected to take part in a six-month training programme covering aspects of health, nutrition, prevention and education. These young people have indeed played a useful role in attending to programmes for the reduction of disability. In Saudi Arabia, the University of Abha designated some of its students to follow up the cases of resident families, with a view to the early detection of cases of disability. There are thus experiments here and there, but they need to become more common and to be directed towards a specific objective.<sup>3/</sup> Use may also be made of the media and publishing. Among positive initiatives in this area we may cite the organization by Egyptian television of a special programme for the families of disabled persons, to help them both to understand the condition and to meet the disabled person's requirements. The programme provides advice and guidelines designed to

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<sup>1/</sup> This became clear in the course of an interview conducted by the author with some supervisors and officials of the special schools for intellectual development (which provide teaching to mentally retarded children), Ministry of Education, Egypt (15 November 1988).

<sup>2/</sup> Kuwait Society for the Care of the Disabled, The Disabled, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (Kuwait, 1985), p. 15.

<sup>3/</sup> Seminar organized by the Arab Centre for Research on Development and the Future.

facilitate the family's interaction with its disabled children.<sup>1/</sup> A booklet was also printed in Egypt some years ago, under the title "Dialogue with a mother", in an attempt to make mothers aware of disability cases and how to detect and treat them: it deals specifically with mental disability.<sup>2/</sup> The production of more such informative booklets and their wider distribution would undoubtedly help to make the phenomenon rarer. However, it should be noted that daily newspapers and magazines pay scant attention to this important topic. In a review by this researcher of the material contained in one Egyptian daily paper (Al-Ahram) over the past nine years, it was observed that the provision of information to the family, and the heightening of society's awareness of disability, had been neglected. Most of the material related to the opening of institutions, the adoption of decisions or the formation of committees, etc., which are, basically, of concern to those who formulate decisions and social policies.<sup>3/</sup>

#### B. The disabled person and the community

The disabled person cannot be integrated into the community unless that community accepts him and considers him to be an active and productive member thereof. It is interesting to note society's attitudes towards the disabled, particularly in some rural communities of the Arab world. Some invent vague and fanciful explanations which endow the disabled person with a form of social status, designed to conceal his disability and treat it as a sort of hidden power. The real reason for such an attitude is their feeling of embarrassment and shame with respect to the disability and their desire to invest the disabled person with a more exalted extra sense in order to draw a veil over his real deficiency. While this is a negative attitude, it is better than other attitudes which neglect or deny any form of care to the disabled person, or than those which pity him or treat him as an incomplete person. Natural acceptance of disability can be achieved only through a positive attitude on the part of society,<sup>4/</sup> meaning acceptance of the disabled individual as a person with abilities, feelings, desires, characteristics and potential like any other member of society, whom we can expect to perform in conformity with his experience and abilities and who must be helped to overcome his various impairments and shortcomings.

The endeavour to change community attitudes towards the disabled is of fundamental importance if social rehabilitation in the broad sense is to be successful and if the disabled person is to participate in the life of the community. Approaches to the community must therefore fulfil two objectives:

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<sup>1/</sup> Including ways of making it easier for a blind person to move about the house, the arrangement of furniture in such a way as to facilitate his mobility, etc. The programme is broadcast on Channel Three.

<sup>2/</sup> Uthman Faraj, "Dialogue with a mother".

<sup>3/</sup> The review covered the file concerning the disabled in the archives of Al-Ahram (Cairo), from 1974 to 1988.

<sup>4/</sup> Jamil Tawfiq, "Categories of disabled persons, their psychological and physical characteristics and the role of the disabled in society", Seminar on the Welfare of the Disabled in the Arab Gulf States, pp. 59-60.

1. They must provide a measure of information concerning disability, the reasons for it and interaction with it, in a manner which enables the community to increase its awareness of the condition.

2. In conjunction with the first objective and, to some extent, as a result of it, they must cultivate positive value- and behaviour-related attitudes towards the disabled by preparing the community for interaction with the disabled before it opens its doors to them.

Before discussing the means and instruments to be used for the social integration of the disabled, it should be noted that certain initial requirements must be met. Foremost among these are welfare services in the areas of health, rehabilitation and education, as well as the facilitation of opportunities for access and mobility. With respect to the facilitation of access, it is important that modern buildings and homes - in particular - should conform to certain construction specifications which facilitate the mobility and access of disabled persons. This is an area which can subsequently be given more attention if approaches to the community are enhanced by fresh ideas designed to ensure the disabled person's integration and participation in society.

The education system ranks as one of the instruments which may enable the disabled person to be accepted in the community. An attitude which permits the disabled to participate with the non-disabled in education and training helps the disabled to adapt and encourages them to develop their abilities; the success of this approach has been proved by certain research projects.<sup>1/</sup> Our encouragement of this attitude must, however, remain within the limits of the disabled person's condition and his ability to keep up with his peers; otherwise, its positive features will have the opposite of the intended effect. The education system is not simply an instrument which enables the disabled to be integrated into society but a means of correcting the values, attitudes and behaviour of the non-disabled towards the disabled. Some researchers<sup>2/</sup> refer to the need for a revision of books and study curricula, in order to rid them of some of the misrepresentation which reinforce negative attitudes towards the disabled. The education system is thus a means of adapting the disabled to society, of heightening awareness and of changing attitudes.

Sports and cultural activities are also means whereby the disabled person may be enabled to participate in the community. In recent years sports teams and associations for the disabled have been set up in many Arab countries.

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<sup>1/</sup> Samirah Abu Zayd, Proposed programme for the upbringing of disabled children such as to limit disability, research paper submitted to the Conference on the Limitation of Disability, Association of Institutions for the Care of Special Categories and the Disabled, Arab Republic of Egypt (6-8 December 1988), p. 5.

<sup>2/</sup> Seminar organized by the Arab Centre for Research on Development and the Future.



A special Arab sports meeting has also been arranged for them. If opportunities are to be offered to the disabled through public or private clubs,<sup>1/</sup> encouragement and support is required from the State, together with the provision of sufficient facilities<sup>2/</sup> for the practice of sports and the proper arrangement of activities. In the context of sports and recreational activities, we may mention the project adopted by some countries (Spain, for example) to encourage social integration of the disabled by including them, along with their friends, families and peers, in the organization of annual activities open to all.<sup>3/</sup> Such activities are not restricted to the practice of sports but extend to reading, debates, entertainment, study, etc. The essence of the idea is to involve all - disabled and non-disabled alike - in organizing such activities; and the idea could easily be applied in Arab countries.

The third important instrument for the achievement of social integration and acceptance of the disabled by the community is the media. The media can address the community as a whole and establish an awareness of disability and the disabled while at the same time directing special programmes towards the disabled. In most Arab countries, the media appear to deal with the second task at the expense of the first, to the extent that they - especially since the commemoration of the International Year of Disabled Persons - mostly present special programmes for the disabled, without paying much attention to the planning of a considered information campaign to change the attitudes of public opinion as a whole towards the disabled.

A role may also be played by local institutions and local government authorities. If disability is more widespread in rural areas than in the cities,<sup>4/</sup> this implies a special responsibility for the various local authorities. Each authority can make its own effort both to establish programmes for the reduction of disability and to provide all possible means - through education, information and sports and cultural activities - to ensure the integration of the disabled into the life of the community.

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<sup>1/</sup> Such as the Kuwait Club for the Disabled and the Alexandria Club for the Disabled.

<sup>2/</sup> Reference is made to the activities of the Sports Association for the Disabled in Egypt. Instead of the State encouraging and patronizing the Association, there has been conflict for years between ministerial bodies (Social Affairs and the Supreme Sports Council) over the Association's affiliation.

<sup>3/</sup> The Disabled, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science (Kuwait, 1985), p. 36.

<sup>4/</sup> United Nations estimates indicates that 80 per cent of disabled persons live in scattered rural areas of developing countries. For example, a study conducted in Syria in 1975 reveals that cases of natural disability are more prevalent in rural than in urban areas, with 64 per cent occurring there, as opposed to only 34 per cent in the towns. For further details, see Seminar on the Social and Vocational Integration of the Disabled, League of Arab States (Tunis, 1980), p. 8.

Means of achieving the social integration of the disabled also include the role of representative organizations, which can ensure their greater participation in the process of formulating the social policies by which they are affected. In the contemporary world, these organizations reflect the wish of the disabled to attain a higher level of participation by giving expression to their views and problems and discussing their needs.

We also emphasize the role that can be played by non-governmental organizations - which reflect an effort by the people - to heighten awareness and provide information on the subject under discussion. I refer, for example, to the commendable effort of the "Arab Family in Sharjah" organization, which, through the endeavours of its members, strives to ensure that public opinion is supportive of and sympathetic with the cause.

These are then, inter alia, some of the major means which may enable some integration of the disabled into the life of the community and may help to establish a positive view of the disabled person as a productive partner. It is hoped that the preceding discussion of the relationship between the disabled person and society will have reflected the interdependence of different aspects of the issue and the number of social, cultural and economic variables involved, as well as the nature of the response, which must also be social, cultural and economic and must be directed at both the disabled person and society.

#### IV. CONCLUSION: SUGGESTED POLICIES

The policies suggested for the integration of the disabled into society and the provision of added work opportunities for them depend on a combination of both governmental and non-governmental efforts. They also depend on co-ordinated and comprehensive policies, since increased effectiveness and enhanced performance rest on such co-ordination. We emphasize the importance of attracting political attention to this vital topic in order that it may be accorded priority on the agendas of decision-makers. The establishment of a supreme council comprising politicians capable of providing support to the cause and specialized experts will therefore ensure effectiveness in our Arab communities. Legislative means also occupy an important position, although they are not always borne out by reality. Such means are important: they indicate how far the cause of the disabled has developed in society and pave the way for the acceptance of change.

Among policies whose value may be affirmed are the following:

1. Education policy: By virtue of being directed towards the whole of society, this policy may bring about the desired awareness in society of disability issues. It can play its part in changing society's attitudes to the disabled and define who is disabled, what his problems are and how one may properly interact with him. Education policy also increases integration of the disabled into society, particularly when the nature of the disability permits. The need, then, is to remove from our curricula and courses of study any misrepresentations which obstruct integration of the disabled into our social, economic and cultural life, meaning a deeper and more scientific approach in education policy's response to disability issues.

2. Information policy: Policy in this area has a major responsibility for correcting society's perception of and attitudes to the disabled and for providing special services to them. To perform the first task, information policy has to be aware of and to draw attention to the scale of the problem, its dimensions and negative effects on the dynamics of society. In doing so, it must not rely on arousing feelings of compassion or pity but on demonstrating the remaining creative abilities of the disabled person and the ways in which we may give him scope to apply them. With respect to the second task, information policy must give expression to the disabled's right to information; here, there are pioneer experiments in the industrialized States which should be taken into account. In cases of sensory disability (deafness and dumbness), some news bulletins are designed to cope with this group: often a portion of the television screen is used to address the deaf and dumb at the same time that a bulletin is broadcast to the general public. The most important concept demonstrated here is that all citizens have an equal right to information and that there is no difference between the non-disabled and the disabled, providing continuous confirmation of this axiomatic principle.

3. Scientific policy and technology: Any attempt to change and enhance the position of the disabled must adopt a basically scientific approach. The simplest way to start would be to compile comprehensive statistics and scientific data on the disabled in Arab society, denoting categories and levels (partial or total) of disability, their distribution (urban/rural areas; male/female) and other details which may be of use in policy-making. It is also important, in the context of such scientific policy, to ensure that field research is conducted for the purpose of following up disability cases, the extent to which they are integrated into society, the work opportunities made available to them and the problems by which they are confronted. Scientific policy is linked to technological policy, with the aim of developing special technology for the disabled and encouraging its national and popular dimensions through national research centres, which can make innovations in the production of appropriate low-cost technology. We emphasize the national dimension of such technological policy not simply in terms of national efforts but in terms of the establishment of agreed national criteria and standards, the fulfilment of requirements (maintenance and spare parts), the familiarization of disabled persons with such appliances and instruction in their use.

4. Mobilization of civilian institutions: Trade unions, associations and federations should be prompted to address the problem and to participate in its solution, not only through the provision of funds but also by means of raising awareness and making efforts to integrate the disabled into work and into the life of the community. Approaches to employers and trade unions will undoubtedly contribute to progress in this direction.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of the suggested policies depends on the extent to which they are co-ordinated and comprehensive: these two criteria can determine whether the response to disability issues is a success or a failure.



