

# Disability-Inclusive Education in Jordan

**‘My son is 10 years old and he has never been to school. But he is eager to learn. I hope someday he can go to school and learn how to read and write...’**

– Jordanian mother of a child with cerebral palsy in Zarqa Governorate, Jordan.

## What is inclusive education?

UNESCO defines inclusive education as a transformative process that ensures full participation and access to quality learning opportunities for all children, young people, and adults, respecting and valuing diversity, and eliminating all forms of discrimination in and through education.<sup>(1)</sup>

As for inclusive education of children with disabilities, the Ministry of Education in Jordan<sup>(2)</sup> defines it as the process of ensuring the right of all children with disabilities to access, attend, participate, and succeed in their mainstream local schools, by removing barriers to learning and participation.



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## Situation in Jordan

### How many children with disabilities are there in Jordan?

According to the 2015 General Population and Housing Census,<sup>(3)</sup> around 11% of the total population in Jordan aged 5 and above have disabilities. The Department of Statistics highlights

that there were around 2.4 million children aged 5 to 14 in Jordan in 2019.<sup>(4)</sup>

### How many of children with disabilities have access to education?

Statistics from the Ministry of Education<sup>(5)</sup> and Ministry of Social Development combined show that for the academic year 2018/2019, only 1.9% (27,694) of the total 1.4 million children enrolled in primary education are children with disabilities. The Department of Statistics (2019) confirms that 79% of persons with disabilities of school age are excluded from any form of education.

More in general, according to UNICEF (2020),<sup>(6)</sup> there are 112,016 children aged 6-15 who are out of school in Jordan. Rates are higher for children of non-Jordanian nationalities: 50,600 Syrian children are out of school (compared to 39,800 Jordanians and 21,500 for other nationalities). However, this report does not include disaggregated data on out-of-school children with disabilities.

The situation of Syrian refugees requires specific attention: within this group, 22.9% of children aged 2 years and above have disabilities. Furthermore, Syrian refugee children with disabilities of primary school age in Jordan are less likely to attend school than their peers without disabilities, and than children with disabilities of other nationalities. Boys with disabilities are most likely to never enroll in school and least likely to attend school regularly. Whilst further research is needed to understand all causal factors, more exposure to bullying, increased parental expectations for boys to be at work and earning more than girls, and increased negative stigma directed towards boys at school causing drop outs are three important factors.<sup>(7)</sup>



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1. Definition adopted from the Cali Commitment, Outcome Document of the 2019 UNESCO International Forum on Inclusion and Equity in Education.

2. Ministry of Education & Higher Council for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020). 10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education. [the\\_10-year\\_strategy\\_for\\_inclusive\\_education.pdf \(moe.gov.jo\)](#).

3. This rate covers individuals who suffer from any degree of functional difficulties (simple to the absolute, inability to perform). More information here: [Main\\_Result.pdf \(dos.gov.jo\)](#).

4. Calculations are based on this interactive database of the Department of Statistics: [PxWeb - Select table \(dos.gov.jo\)](#). Of the 2.4 million, around 1.3 million are aged 5-9, while around 1.1 million are aged 10-14.

5. Ministry of Education (2018). Education Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022. [ESP\\_English.pdf \(unesco.org\)](#).

6. UNICEF & Ministry of Education (2020). Jordan Country Report on Out-Of-School Children. Retrieved from: [Jordan Country Report on Out-of-School Children | UNICEF Jordan](#).

7. HI and IMMAP (2018). Removing Barriers: The Path towards Inclusive Access: Disability Assessment among Syrian Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon. Jordan Report. July 2018. [Available at Humanitarian Data Exchange website with dataset](#).

# Disability-inclusive education policies in Jordan

As a State Party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), Jordan commits to promoting disability-inclusive education (Article 24). Its commitment has been translated into a number of national policy documents such as:

- **The Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2017, Articles 17 & 18:**
  - It stresses the responsibility of the government to provide educational opportunities for persons with disabilities with reasonable accommodations.
- **The 10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education of 2020:**
  - It envisions that by 2031, the percentage of school-aged children with disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools reaches 10% of the total number of school-aged children with disabilities, while providing them with all the requirements for inclusive education.

**‘I brought my child to a school one time to register him but the principal rejected her because of her disability.’**

– Syrian father of a child with disability in Mafraq Governorate, Jordan.

## Which barriers restrict children with disabilities' access and stay in school?<sup>(8)</sup>

**Limited data and evidence** on the situation of children with disabilities in accessing inclusive education, and on how gender and disability intersect. Data on out-of-school children with disabilities are scarce. As a result, although progress has been made towards inclusion, children with disabilities often remain invisible in the national education system.

**Prevailing negative attitudes** of families and communities towards disability resulting in poor recognition of the importance of education of children with disabilities. This is exacerbated by households' poverty, in particular amongst Syrian refugees. Stigma and discrimination perpetuate violence and bullying against children with disabilities, as well as segregation of children with disabilities in the education system, where they are educated in separated settings, with low expectations and limited resources.

**Lack of the education system's capacity** to welcome and support children with disabilities in mainstream education: lack of teachers' preparation on inclusive education strategies, inaccessible and rigid curricula, and inaccessible physical and virtual learning environments.

The closure of schools in Jordan since March 2020 due to the **COVID-19 pandemic** continues to impact 2.37 million learners.<sup>(9)</sup> While the Ministry of Education has put in place distance learning

platforms, such as Darsak,<sup>(10)</sup> analysis from the partners of the Education Sector Working Group in Jordan stresses the high risk of learning loss and spike in drop-out rates, especially amongst the most marginalized learners, when schools will reopen.

## Recommendations

Building on the 10-Year Strategy for Inclusive Education of the Ministry of Education in Jordan, HI calls on financial and technical partners to prioritize disability-inclusive education, at all levels of interventions:

- **Policy level:** Support the Ministry of Education in fulfilling its commitment to disability-inclusive education, by investing human and financial resources to implement action plans in alignment with strategies. This includes a focus on inclusive education at all stages, from early childhood development through to secondary level.
- **Family level:** Strengthen parental and family support, by raising awareness of parents and family members on the importance of education of children with disabilities and by providing opportunities for household's economic independence.
- **Community level:** Enhance understanding and capacities of local communities to promote disability-inclusive education through communication campaigns, advocacy, and awareness raising activities.
- **Service level:** Increase capacities of mainstream schools to welcome and adequately support children with disabilities, through better prepared teachers and staff, adapted curricula and learning tools, as well as through collaboration with interconnected services (including early childhood development, WASH, health and rehabilitation, transportation, and protection).

8. Information here are summary of the findings of HI Jordan's internal desk review on barriers of children with disabilities to access inclusive education.

9. UNHCR/UNICEF/WFP Multi-Sectoral Rapid Needs Assessment on COVID-19.

10. More information about Darsak: [دروس أونلاين \(darsak.gov.jo\)](http://darsak.gov.jo).