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## **[Accessibility for the Disabled - A Design Manual for a Barrier Free Environment](#)**

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### **PREFACE**



Ministry of Social Affairs  
National Committee for  
the Disabled

The Ministry of Social Affairs devotes special attention to the question of disability, striving to provide the various facilities required to ensure that every disabled person has work opportunities that will help him or her to become a productive member of society.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is cooperating in the area with the National Committee for the Disabled in an integrated approach and a programme to ensure that the question of disability will be dealt with in every regard: quality of services offered, ease of procedures followed, current legislation, and standards criteria to be adopted for training and rehabilitation.

The approach followed by the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District (SOLIDERE) - an approach that developed into the present Accessibility for the Disabled, a Design Manual for a Barrier Free Environment, met the requirements of the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the two parties were largely in agreement on both goals and methods of implementation.

The Ministry of Social Affairs therefore decided to adopt the content of this program pending the promulgation of new laws currently being sought in Parliament.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Committee for the Disabled wish to thank all those who took part in the drafting of this manual, in particular the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District (SOLIDERE) and ESCWA. It is hoped that joint efforts will continue to be exerted to safeguard the rights of disabled persons - indeed of all citizens without exception.

Ministry of Social Affairs

## National Committee for the Disabled



United Nations  
Economic and Social  
Commission for Western  
Asia

Twenty years have passed since the General Assembly adopted resolution 31/123 of 16 December 1976, proclaiming 1981 the International Year of Disabled Persons, an event that constituted a landmark in the long struggle towards recognizing the rights of the disabled and creating a better understanding of their needs and appreciation of their capabilities. After the International Year of Disabled Persons came the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 37/52 of 3 December 1982. In its resolution 37/53 of the same date, the General Assembly proclaimed the period 1983-1992 the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons. These actions prompted considerable activity in the field of disability at the international, regional and national levels.

The Conference on the Capabilities and Needs of Disabled Persons in the ESCWA Region, which was held in November 1989, provided a regional forum for the discussion of the many issues related to disability between individuals, organizations and officials. The issue of accessibility for the disabled in the urban environment was given due attention and the Conference recommended that city planning and building and construction legislation, should take into account the conditions that facilitate the movement of disabled persons and ensure their safety, including in the design of infrastructural services, transport and the entrances and interiors of buildings.

Early in 1994, ESCWA was requested to provide Lebanon with assistance in developing construction standards and policy recommendations to accommodate disabled people. ESCWA began with an assessment of the magnitude of the issue on the national level, hoping to devise a long-term strategy and aiming at placing urgent short-term measures within an integral capacious perspective.

No dependable statistics exist at present defining the extent of disability in Lebanese society. However, given the severity and duration of war and unrest that the country has experienced and the damage to the urban fabric, which is especially evident in the urban centres, and particularly visible in the Beirut Central District, one can deduce that the disabled form a significant sector of the community. Some estimates

put the figure at 150,000 to 250,000, of which 80,000 are physically disabled as a result of the war. A good database on disability in Lebanon is essential for any future development effort in this field.

The present state of development in Lebanon calls for a dual-track approach in handling the issue of accessibility for the disabled. The first track should aim at influencing the development and reconstruction of the Beirut Central District (BCD). At the time of preparation of this Manual, the planning and design processes of the BCD were at a fairly advanced stage, calling for the application of established standards and recommendations, with appropriate review procedures. The contribution of this Manual should be viewed in this context.

The second track should have the long-term aim of addressing the issue on the national level. At the core, this approach is the development and legal enforcement of standards and regulations. Although the second track would have a wider geographical and social effect throughout the country, implementation of the first track would certainly serve to make the BCD an excellent demonstration case on both the national and regional levels.

In physical terms, the provision of a barrier-free environment can be undertaken in four complementary domains:

- (a) Inside buildings;
- (b) In the immediate vicinity of buildings;
- (c) On local roads and paths;
- (d) In open spaces and recreational areas.

The idea for this Manual first came to surface in early 1994 during meetings that were held with a number of government officials and representatives of organizations concerned with disability in Lebanon. The Manual represents the first phase in a broad effort to provide a barrier-free environment throughout the country. It is designed so as to facilitate application in the planning of new environments as well as in the renovation of existing ones. The Manual can also be used as a reference by designers and planners throughout the Arab region.

Experience gained from the application of the Manual to new constructions and restored buildings within the BCD will help in future development of the Manual and in arriving at appropriate legislation on accessibility.

Future efforts to implement essential parts of this Manual on the national level will be coordinated with other concerned Lebanese agencies, and it is hoped that the Manual will become a reference for the promotion of non-handicapping environments in the region.

The Lebanese National Council for the Affairs of the Disabled carried out a pre-publication review of the Manual under the chairmanship of H.E. the Minister of Social Affairs. This Manual is the product of a joint effort between the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District (SOLIDERE) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

Hazem El-Beblawi  
Executive Secretary  
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for  
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