

Step Ahead

Space for children with intellectual disabilities in Lebanon

The healthcare industry is one of the most under looked and influential sectors in the world today. Design and innovation have been lacking in this field especially when it comes to the large population of disabled people around the world. Sadly, in today's Arab countries, more precisely Lebanon, there seems to be discrimination towards the intellectually incapable people, this is shown from the fact that there is a limited number of basic services for the community. In addition, many people do not understand what the true meaning of a disability is. However, 10-15% of the Lebanese population suffers from a disability, having 45,000 kids of this percentage being kids between 5 and 14 years old.

Lebanon adopted law 220/200 on the rights of people with disabilities in Lebanon. This law is mainly built on a set of rights integrating citizens with disabilities into social and economic life, through employment, healthcare, housing and education. Sadly, this law was never implemented and thus, these people suffer from many barriers in Lebanon, and those barriers include, first, access to work, since 80% of these people are not or have never been employed. Second, they face barriers to healthcare, since rehabilitation services remain insufficient in availability, hard to access and inadequate in addition to the lack of financial coverage for specific services. And third, they face barriers to education, 32% of the people have just received primary education, whereas 14% have never received any sort of education. There are lack of schooling options which leads parents to raise their kids with disabilities within the family, and thus, they remain uneducated. The state of Lebanon has not embraced the model of inclusive education, the ministry of Education has failed to take responsibility for the education of these people, due to the fact that the Ministry of Social affair has not transferred the budget dedicated to an inclusive education.

The task I have set upon myself for this competition, is to design a safe space for children with disabilities ages 3 to 6 years old. It will be a recreational and educational space where children will be allowed to traverse across the borders of their imagination and creativity, this can range anywhere between art and acting to physical activities, following the conceptual approach of educational entertainment and playful learning. The kids will be undergoing different activities, and each activity will be having a space specific for it. The activities include: artistic, physical activities, interactive activities and entertainment activities. It is an ideal forum where social rules, values, and interactive skills will be promoted. It will aim to complement local school curricula and seeks to enlighten children with disabilities about the society they live in today. This entire community would be supervised by psychiatrists, psychologists and experts in the needed fields who would be in charge in case anything goes wrong. This will allow children with disabilities to grow in a safe environment thus advancing their social and societal skills.

