CHAPTER 7

Laws Are Not Enough: Unlocking Capabilities Through Innovations in Governance

Abstract Many factors beyond the legal system determine the ultimate success or failure of implementing comprehensive accessibility policies and programs. There are two main drivers for inclusive urban development: political commitment to inclusive practices, and the mechanisms and institutions needed to administer and facilitate them. This chapter explores how the narrative and conditions that determine equity and access in cities are shaped. There is a clear need globally to strengthen administrative and coordinating capacities and improve connections between cities and their citizens. This chapter highlights the importance of creating and disseminating information regarding accommodations, assistive technologies, and training throughout schools, community centers, advocacy organizations, and other social institutions. It defines leadership (executive and budgetary support), institutions (administrative and coordinating capacities), attitudes (beliefs), and participation (representation) as central evaluative criteria for evaluating progress at the local level. It also highlights how attitudes and cultural beliefs may produce negative associations of people with disabilities by assuming high dependency and individual fault, rather than pursuing policies aimed at equity, access, and inclusion.

Keywords Evaluative criteria for inclusion • Leadership • Institutional capacity • Budgetary support • Participation • Representation of people with disabilities • Public administration • Equity • Access • Inclusion • Attitudes • Beliefs

131

Why Laws Are Not Enough

Many factors feed into defining success or failure when deploying a comprehensive policy or program on access and inclusion. In this chapter, I explore how leadership (through executive and budgetary support), institutions (through administrative and coordinating capacities), attitudes (and beliefs), and participation (and representation) shape the narrative and conditions that determine equity and access in cities.

Understanding the Role of Leadership

Leadership in this section is defined through executive and budgetary supports. Public administration theories have had a large impact on executive and budgetary support literature. Wildavsky (1986) and Baumgartner et al. (2014) tackle the fluidity of the policy process and how individual and collective actions shape institutions and budgets. Wildavsky develops a cultural and normative theory of budgeting and uses comparative examples of various levels of analysis to construct explanations for how budgetary processes interact with other political domains. An important premise of his argument is that political cultures contextualize and embed preferences about ways of organizing social activity and, hence, different budgetary behaviors. In other words, resource allocation in any given context epitomizes the prevailing structures and modes of power. He emphasizes the multi-faceted importance of budget and monetary allocations such as enabling public policies, program implementation, and budget constraints. Wildavsky additionally observes that resource scarcity structures political and collective actions and that a budget is more than "a mechanism for allocating resources," with "the aim to obtain desired objectives at the lowest cost…and for pursuing efficiency" (8). Instead, budgets also structure social value and replicate valued social processes. Ultimately, Wildavsky argues that analysis of a governing body's budget allocation can serve as a lens to examine the dominant cultural and ideological imaginaries (zeitgeist) as manifested through political choices and mechanisms for shaping social life.

Baumgartner et al. build upon punctuated equilibrium theory to develop insight into the broader policy process. Punctuated equilibrium theory emphasizes how the evolution of public discourse affects the acceptance or rejection of the status quo; this allows for examination in opportunities for policy change or reversal. The theory utilizes a multiple streams

framework to contextualize policy within a process. For Baumgartner et al., this contextualization to a great extent defines what is created by explaining how policies are conceptualized, measured, and executed. However, neither Wildavsky nor Baumgartner et al. raise the issue of social value creation explicitly. They do, however, agree that stability and change in public policy preferences (unlike previous theories) is shaped by shifting social and political tides that adapt to change in the public understanding of existing social problems. Both Wildavsky and Baumgartner inform our understanding of executive and budgetary support and allow us to conceptualize how the allocation and distribution of power and wealth can contribute to fostering more equitable and inclusive outcomes for persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups.

Understanding the Role of Institutional Capacity

To study the public policy process in Dubai is to study the various interactions between the actors, agents, beneficiaries, and exogenous events that all affect policy creation and outcomes. The role of civil society in shaping the dominant cultural configurations in the pursuit of building the elusive "inclusive city" is increasingly important. However, in a place where social or advocacy groups are not organized, underfunded, or weak, we must resort to understanding public sector institutions and their capacity to act.

Civil society organizations engage in advocating for the rights and wishes of the public. For people with disabilities, local organizing is very important. Civil society groups in many countries work with governments to deliver services and contribute solutions to inequalities across diverse areas; from training to transportation. Organizations run by individuals who live with disabilities carry influence and can help mobilize allies to help foster greater commitments.

Administrative and coordinating capacity is particularly important in Dubai considering the breadth and scale of social, economic, political, cultural, and technological changes that have shaped the twenty-first century. These huge shifts bring forth new needs, new capabilities, new risks, and new rewards. Due to these emerging complexities, Farazmand (2009) argues that the uncertain nature of the global environment indicates that traditional approaches are unable to meet many of the new challenges ahead. Public administration increasingly has to be rethought, both in its processes and outcomes.

Farazmand emphasizes the role of adaptive strategies to foresee and mitigate dynamic and unpredictable changes. He asserts that strengthening the public sector and its services "must be done externally through laws, legislation, and reclamation of the appropriate role for government as the guardian of society in domestic and international affairs…[as well as] internally by engaging citizens, community organizations, and other organizational institutions in governance and administration…" (1012). Thus, Farazmand calls for greater flexibility in both the public sector and civil society. Transparency is a crucial component of this strategy; it considers the importance of citizen participation, trust, and confidence in governmental practices.

Schout and Jordan (2005) examine the strength of coordinating capacities in the European Union (EU) by examining environmental policy. By analyzing the EU's governing system, he sheds light on the EU's self-interpretation of governance as loose centralization and emphasis on network-led steering via self-organization of administration. However, the author indicates that administrative capacities diminish because of challenges to coordination. He suggests an emphasis on strengthening secretarial roles to scrutinize relevant agendas, monitoring of progress, and auditing of required administrative capacities at multi-sector, multi-state levels of governance.

It is important to strengthen administrative and coordinating capacities to improve services for people with disabilities. In addition, the accessibility of information regarding service providers is crucial to addressing a range of barriers. Unfortunately, however, supervisors and leaders often lack the knowledge and awareness to accommodate services for those with disabilities. For example, the final report of the Jumpstarting Inclusive Education Workshop held in the UAE recommended continued training with groups of principals, supervisors, and teachers to strengthen their existing knowledge. This would allow them to learn how to better accommodate and support effective education and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The lack of awareness in employment services is the result of ineffective coordination between direct agencies and bureaucracies. This is typically caused by ineffective coordination between bureaucracies. In addition, the pervasive role of ableism and cultural negativity affects capacities for self-representation and the voice of people with disabilities. Thus, in order to meet standards for basic freedoms and functions, there needs to be an increase of internal capacities for administrators and bureaucrats to address the needs of persons with disabilities.

Understanding the Role of Attitudes and Beliefs

Attitudes and beliefs are important to disability policy and inclusion because they directly and indirectly shape courses of social action. Political attitudes and cultural beliefs typically produce and reproduce negative associations of persons with disabilities by superficially assuming high dependency and individual fault (vs. policies that are aimed at empowering).

Several authors have looked at the role that attitudes and beliefs play in regard to disability policy. This includes observing how increased levels of inclusion occur due to the ways in which they directly and indirectly determine courses of social action. Albarracín et al. (2005) identify three factors that interchangeably influence attitudes. These are termed affect, beliefs, and behavior. Affect is the moment of initial impact and feeling that people experience given any set of objects or events. Beliefs are mental shortcuts for associating an object or event with a given characteristic. Behaviors are defined as the actions of an individual. These factors reciprocally affect and are affected by attitudes; thus Albarracín et al. conclude that attitudes are not set in stone.

Forester (1993) draws on a wide theoretical tradition to argue that the policymaker's work is a contentious political process and relies on the importance of persuasion. The author raises the question of whether "our language does not [just] simply mirror or picture the world but instead profoundly shape our view of it in the first place" (1). He concludes that policy arguments are selective, both shaping and shaped by regimes of power that include beliefs, attitudes, and values. Attitudes and beliefs shift with respect to an individual's perception of their environments. However, they are also a product of the discourses and worldviews circulated within those environments; thus, people's beliefs both shape and are shaped by the socio-cultural context in which they are embedded.

Furthermore, Baumgartner et al.'s edited collection (2014) highlights the importance of social constructs in the realm of policy creation. Social constructions can be defined as the (typically negative and unrealistic) pre-existing notions, assumptions, stereotypes, associations, and representations of groups, populations, and histories. These social constructions tend to be the product of dominant regimes of truth, or the cultural spirit of the times, circulated by discourses, social structures, practices, the media, and so on. Ultimately, these constructs manifest themselves throughout all sectors of society, including policy and law. Not only do these constructs, "impact the material welfare of target groups [in policy

practices] but [they] also influence their social reputations, political attitudes, and participation patterns" (105–106). Thus, groups lying at the margins of society (via exclusionary policy practices due to preexisting social constructs) are typically deemed unworthy of political inclusion and participation in policy.

This lack of political power decreases the likelihood of culture-wide change. Such rethinking of social constructs could occur through the implementation of policies related to marginalized groups and redefining their needs and characteristics. The author concludes that "policy designs impact public and elite opinion, the social construction of target groups, the distribution of political power, resources, and even the legitimacy of various knowledge systems" (108). With respect to disability policy, political rhetoric and cultural discourse produce negative associations to people with physical or mental disabilities by superficially assuming high dependency (vs. policy that is aimed at empowering, etc.). These arguments highlight the importance of the interchanging dynamics between beliefs and attitudes about marginalized groups and policy processes. By being inclusive with our policy processes, we can contribute to the rethinking of preexisting attitudes and beliefs about marginalized populations.

Understanding the Role of Participation and Representation

Robust participation and representation processes are crucial to creating more inclusive and accessible policies. Fagence (1977) highlights the importance of participatory and inclusive decision-making in urban planning processes. He begins by foregrounding the importance of nuanced and cautious cultural translation of inclusive decision-making within domestic and international settings. In addition to various benefits, this ensures the unified implementation of decisions with minimization of unintended consequences via cultural barriers. Fagence paraphrases Burke (1968): "planning agencies and the general citizenry [should try] to achieve a consensual precision on the interpretation of 'citizen participation', how the concept may be operationalized, what resources will be required, what the various decision-making responsibilities will entail and where they may be properly located" (3–4). This form of collaborative planning minimizes the room for error in the conceptualization of the citizenry's desires and the actions of planning agencies.

Fagence notes that the higher diversity and decentralization of interests that are represented within planning strategies results in more innovative decisions. Methods for planning should emphasize the interaction with and creation of public consultation techniques that increase public support and participatory input. All these recommendations for citizen participation in planning purposes are crucial to our understanding of unequal power dynamics. The author points out that participatory decision-making is important for power equalization in the public sector. Systemic exclusion of populations whose power lies in the margins of society is that whose input is most crucial to planning processes.

Leadership, Modernization, Social Protection, and Human Rights

The role of human rights in the official government rhetoric can be understood as part of the UAE's efforts at signaling modernity. Social development is a strategic objective of the UAE Federal Strategy and as such state development is linked to achieving the nation's social development goals. Social development is linked to the Federal Government Strategy and the Federal Strategy Brief of 2007, which is fully detailed in the UAE 2021 and Dubai Strategy 2021. The Federal Strategy Brief of 2007 highlighted social development as the first of six national priorities. However, by 2013 after four years of nursing a recovering economy, it became clear that the outcomes fell short of the intended goals.

The Strategy Brief displayed a telling tagline of, "Leadership, Integration, and Excellence." Natasha Ridge, Professor at the Dubai School of Government, noted that the UAE uses a tactic she referred to as "strategic signaling" to promote or present progress to stakeholders. In essence, the government signals its intentions in priority areas through press releases, strategy documents, and public speeches. This pattern is most often seen in the social sectors (like education) where the government wants to show national and international stakeholders that the UAE can lead the discussion, that they are part of the solution, and most importantly that they should command equal respect. Ridge notes that in this case, these signaling efforts aim to demonstrate that the UAE is not a developing country but a developed country. However, when signaling changes the discourse but stalls in implementation, an additional force is needed to push it through the bureaucracies of the individual emirates.

Ridge notes that the use of signaling in promoting social development programs and social protection schemes does not directly improve lives. This fact was evident in the second focus group I held at the Dubai School of Government in 2009. Participants there shared their frustration with disability rights in the UAE. According to stakeholders I spoke to, persons with disabilities, their families, and allies felt that Federal Law No. 29 has had little to no effect on their daily lives. I was surprised to find that well over half were either unaware of Federal Law No. 29 (enacted in 2006) or did not know where to find out more about the law. This was confirmed in a national study[1] conducted with 111 persons with disabilities. The study showed that only 10% of respondents were aware of Federal Law No. 29 and only 2% of the respondents were familiar with the content of the law (Alawadhi and Mousa 2009). Almost all foreign nationals I spoke with who live with disabilities stressed their interest in better understanding the implementation of Federal Law No. 29.

Morad, a Jordanian national who uses a wheelchair, and Dana, a Syrian national who is blind, are two foreign-born residents who have disabilities and work in Dubai. Both Morad and Dana expressed their hope that Federal Law No. 29 would protect them from abuse and discrimination and ensure them equal opportunities. This attitude is in contrast to most locals with disabilities who seem to conform to their conditions.

Hussain Al Rahma is 21 and stopped walking at the age of 9 due to a neuromuscular condition. Hussain exemplifies what many other nationals with disabilities I spoke to feel. He is unable to imagine that things in his life could change and said that with respect to his rights, "things are not in my hands." Hussain's story is indicative of a general malaise and feelings of disempowerment that exist among young locals in the UAE, feelings that are amplified for those that live with disabilities.[2]

[1] The study tool was an interview survey. The study was conducted in four of the largest emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, and Fujairah. The survey was conducted by a number of specialists from the Tamkeen Center in Knowledge and Human Development Authority and the Department for Disabled Welfare Management in the Ministry of Social Affairs. The questionnaire was assessed and arbitrated by Ahmad Almulla, head of External Relations at Tamkeen Center, and Nazem Fawzi Mansour, a specialist of Disability Science and specialist of speech and language disorders in the Ministry of Social Affairs.
[2] The story of Hussain is explored in more detail in the Community and Independent Living section in Chap. 5.

Institutional Capabilities in the Context of Basic Functionings

Administering Open and Accessible Health and Rehabilitation Systems

Cultural and context-specific factors add to the complexity and unresponsiveness that characterizes the delivery system for health services in the Emirate of Dubai. Dr. Sandra Willis, who in 2010 was the Chief Advisor on Mental Health and Disability at the Dubai Health Authority (DHA), stated that the DHA was formed in 2006 as part of the process of developing a twenty-first-century healthcare system. The Dubai Health Authority's vision was stated as: "Excellence in health and healthcare in the Emirate of Dubai and a people-focused health sector in which individuals, businesses, healthcare providers and government work together to achieve world-class results." Although the vision for the healthcare system in the UAE was clear, interviews with healthcare professionals and persons with disabilities revealed that the vision was still a long way from being properly realized.

By 2012, a range of healthcare initiatives were still in their infancy. A senior official at the Dubai Health Authority confided that the health sector in Dubai was plagued by inefficiencies in scale and regulation. According to parents of children with disabilities that participated in focus groups I conducted at the Dubai School of Government, the health sector in Dubai, "is far from achieving world-class results for everyone, this is even more so for our children who have disabilities. We don't know where to go or who to see, there is very little information for us. Parents of children with disabilities are desperate in Dubai." This frustration is not a secret.

Persons with disabilities in focus group discussions suggested that the health sector is indeed relatively underdeveloped when compared to other sectors such as the economy or tourism. One local Emirati with a mobility impairment admitted, "I don't trust the local hospitals, if you need to be seen in the UAE, make sure you go to the American Hospital." People I spoke with in interviews and focus groups who had disabilities also generally seemed to favor visiting private hospitals if they could or even organizing to leave the UAE to visits experts abroad if they had the means.

For many years, the Ministry of Health has failed to provide habilitation and rehabilitation services at the earliest possible stage. Consequently, the local government of Dubai has sought to develop its own initiatives in

this area. By 2015, the Ministry of Social Affairs still did not offer suffi-cient habilitation and rehabilitation services based on the multidisciplinary assessment of the person's individual needs and strengths. The current habilitation and rehabilitation services are not capable of providing all of the necessary support for persons with disabilities to participate and be included in the community and in all aspects of society. Habilitation and rehabilitation services are available to persons with disabilities in local communities, including in some rural areas of neighboring emirates. Persons with disabilities usually are not informed about and do not have access to assistive devices and technologies pertaining to habilitation and rehabilitation. Rehabilitation professionals and staff do not receive com-prehensive initial and continuing education and are not regulated. No minimum standards exist to license or certify who can be considered quali-fied to practice rehabilitation services in the UAE or in Dubai.

Interview respondents overwhelmingly confirmed that shortages in rehabilitation services were affecting individuals with disabilities and their families. Such shortages are not solely attributable to a lack of financial resources (as is the case in many developing countries) but rather to a lack of laws, political priorities, and the capacity of institutions to effectively develop and administer community-based rehabilitation programs. Dukmak's (2009) research suggests that parents have difficulty accessing rehabilitation services and that they need better access to information and knowledge about rehabilitation services in the UAE. Dukmak's recom-mendations are consistent with my own. Workshops are needed to show parents where to look for public services and general information. Peer support and parents support groups could also allow affected families to share experiences, resources, and information about rehabilitation services in the UAE. These could be organized to include visits to rehabilitation centers and institutions for individuals with disabilities. Dukmak's research also noted that the media plays a major role in providing information on rehabilitation services. His results show that an overwhelming percentage of parents (90.1%) felt that the media has a significant role in empower-ing parents.

Collaboration is needed in the working relationship between rehabilita-tion service providers, regulators, and parents. Service providers have identified many barriers in providing services for individuals with disabili-ties, including policy and administrative issues, lack of resources and ser-vice availability, lack of community awareness and involvement, and culturally sensitive service provision. Parents, on the other hand, should

be given an increased influence regarding the rehabilitation services provided to their children. As such, the status of rehabilitation still falls short of allowing persons with disabilities to attain and maintain maximum independence: full physical, mental, social, and vocational ability; and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life. Such should be the goals of the Department on Disability Services at the Ministry of Social Affairs.

An Ongoing Journey from Exclusion to Integration and Inclusion: Education Policy to Improve Educational Opportunities for All

Federal Law No. 29 and the UAE Constitution provide persons with disabilities the right to education. Nonetheless, federal laws and social norms still enable persons with disabilities to experience discrimination by being routinely excluded from the general education system on the basis of their disability. Both the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Federal Law No. 29 have requirements ensuring, protecting, and promoting the right to education but the local law falls short on several fronts. People with disabilities until very recently were regularly denied the opportunity to receive a mainstream education due to a variety of physical, social, and administrative barriers.

In 2008, the Ministry of Education (MOE), under the leadership of Dr. Hanif Hassan, launched a campaign for inclusion in schools under the "School for All" slogan and established the Department of Special Education. The National Project for the Inclusion of People with Special Needs (2008) focused on environment, facilities, and equal opportunities. Fifteen public and private schools participated and 50 students with special educational needs and disabilities enrolled in mainstream schools. The project yielded variable results due to a variety of reasons including limited resources, human capacity, and specialist support. Ultimately, the project resulted in 12 students with hearing impairments being sent abroad to study and 20 students placed in employment. The project is now expanding to the rest of the UAE. As of 2015, 156 public schools across the UAE participated in the project. Supported by Her Highness Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, the Supreme Chairperson of the Family Development Foundation and Chairwoman of General Women's Union, the National Project for Inclusion is aimed at achieving complete integration of people with disabilities into society at the social, educational, health, and environmental levels.

Education is both a federal and a local issue. On both levels and across the entire system, the provision of education is highly differentiated. It is also discriminatory toward persons with disabilities as it is inaccessible at many levels. For example, only some development skills are available to children and young persons with sensory impairments. Instead, educational efforts by the Ministry should promote independence and social development of the students with impairments. Students with disabilities should have the opportunity to learn braille or sign language in school in a manner that is appropriate and sensitive to their local culture (e.g., Arabic Braille or Arabic Sign Language). Additionally, schools routinely fail to offer options such as alternative script; augmentative and alternative modes, means, and formats of communication; orientation and mobility skills; or sign languages as required by the CRPD. Persons with disabilities do not have access to peer support and mentoring, which would help promote positive self-image and increased socialization. All such efforts should also be tracked, measured, and incorporated within a greater and legally enforced framework for creating a sustainable system for inclusive education.

Inclusive education is a system of education in which all pupils with special educational needs are enrolled in ordinary classes in their district schools and are provided with support services and an education based on their needs. Inclusive schools are based on the basic principle that all schoolchildren in a given community should learn together, so far as is practicable, regardless of their impairments or difficulties. They should recognize and take into account the diverse needs of their pupils, adapt to different styles and rhythms of teaching, and provide a quality education through the appropriate use of resources and study plans as well as partnerships with the community.

There is insufficient knowledge among teachers, principals, and supervisors about adjustments, accommodations, support, and services available to facilitate the effective education and inclusion of persons with disabilities within the general education system. International consultants have been brought in to the Ministry of Education and the Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority to set up plans and conduct workshops on inclusive education. Such programs are just the beginning of a long road but may prove ineffective if local capacities are not strengthened. There exists little administrative training for education and administrative staff. This lowers their ability to take on the required administrative and coordinating tasks needed.

The Ministry of Education collaborated with my organization, the Victor Pineda Foundation, to develop a pioneering program to equip educators with the knowledge and tools necessary to embark on the process of including students with a diversity of abilities in mainstream school environments (Pineda 2010). I helped run a three-day training workshop for mainstream principals, supervisors, and teachers with a team of local and international experts on inclusive education entitled, "It's About Ability – Jumpstarting Inclusive Education in the UAE" in 2009, held at the UNESCO Regional Center for Education Planning (Pineda 2010). The workshop served as a cornerstone for the deployment of the inclusive education initiative and for the implementation of Federal Law No. 29 across the entire public school system in the UAE (Pineda 2010). Through this process, we were able to map out a system-wide plan for supporting inclusive education. The workshop set out to provide participants with the ability to understand and explain the benefits of inclusion as well as the ability to identify, address, and eliminate barriers to inclusive education in their school. Additional exercises allowed teachers and principals to develop their own methods to facilitate inclusion and understand accommodations in the classroom. The workshop allowed participants to understand the difference between integrated and inclusive education and use that understanding to develop and execute a personal and community-wide plan for inclusion.

In small group settings, the principals and supervisors discussed a range of administrative challenges and opportunities. It was clear that better coordination between principals and teachers could help support better outcomes across schools. Additional resources and training could also support their teachers and allow them to deliver better results in the classroom. The teachers discussed the format and structure of teaching with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Participating educators then reconvened to identify barriers to inclusive education and offer solutions as a group.[3] According to statements made by the general teachers during the Jumpstarting Inclusive Education workshop, too many general education teachers and principals pass on the responsibility of educating children with disabilities to special education. The IEP should recommend the necessary curriculum modifications, classroom accommodations, or give

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[3] Schools (Pineda 2010). To learn more, see FINAL REPORT—It's About Ability Workshop: Jump Starting Inclusive Education in the United Arab Emirates, The Victor Pineda Foundation and Ministry of Education (UAE).

modified or alternative assessments required of both the general education and special education teachers (Ministry of Education 2009, 9).

Persons with disabilities in the UAE should be seen as assets and partners in helping to spread a culture of human rights through education. The UAE is aware that teaching and spreading the concepts of human rights is a basic human right. Other factors are related to the complexity and unresponsiveness that characterizes the delivery system for education services. Education professionals should be made aware that those individuals with disabilities, their parents, and allies need to be informed about the special education services available in the country and the importance of these services to promote inclusive education in the UAE.

By 2015, the Community Development Authority (CDA) in the Emirate of Dubai, the Department for Special Needs Services at the Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, and professionals and service providers were well aware that individuals with disabilities, their parents, and allies need continuous training and education that was based on principles of empowerment and empowerment-oriented support services. The advancement and momentum gained after 2018 with the Federal Strategy for People of Determination was a big step in the right direction. However, personal care assistance funding, peer support networks and mentoring, community-based advocacy, dialogue, and debate, as well as the provision of assistive technology and durable medical equipment that supports must continue to be strengthened to sustain and build on the progress.

Institutional Capacity in Employment

Persons with disabilities were up until 2015 not involved in developing policies and standards in the employment sector. Additionally, the lack of role models of successful people with disabilities and the state's relatively weak engagement with policy formulation and analysis are linked to the unresponsiveness that characterizes the employment sector. Focus group participants reported issues related to discrimination in salaries that could be improved by standardization in salary structures. They also lamented a lack of access to meaningful and professional training for furthering development of self-confidence and marketable skills.

Sheikh Mohammed, the Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, has historically personally funded vocational and continuing training programs in his emirate. Certain employment programs are provided through rehabilitation centers that receive some funding through the Federal

Ministry of Social Affairs. Vocational efforts developed through vocational rehabilitation too often fail to provide a sustainable or continuous approach to service provision.

The provision of equipment that assists persons with disabilities to gain or maintain employment is difficult to find or expensive to procure and, according to interview respondents, usually dependent on benevolence by the Ruler or other civic leaders. Assistive technologies play a key role as they can often allow people who may otherwise struggle to find employment to access a far greater variety of roles. For this reason, assistive technologies should be on the basis of the employment strategy for the UAE. The provision of transport services to allow persons with disabilities to easily travel to and from work is another strategy that can significantly improve employment opportunities.

HR professionals and mainstream training centers should be made aware that individuals with disabilities, their parents, and allies need to be educated about the professional and training services available in the country, the importance of these services for the UAE, and how to access them. Additionally, there should be more knowledge about how to identify the providers of employment and training services. Information regarding reasonable accommodations, assistive technologies, and vocational training should consistently be communicated. For those not able to work in open employment, sheltered workshops can play a valuable role in allowing people to contribute while still receiving a level of support. Clearly, these types of targeted training programs and workshop environments require dedicated funding and management to be effective but are not currently being widely supported in any meaningful way.

Institutional Capability in the Context of Basic Freedoms

Institutional Capacity in the Context of Public and Political Participation

In the public and political realm, the general population does not participate in any meaningful regard in the affairs of the state. And this reality is even more pronounced for persons with disabilities. The UAE is a federation of seven autonomous emirates; the seven Rulers each have total authority within their emirate. There are no elections and there is only limited representation through the development of the Federal National Council.

Additional structural and cultural factors limit the participation of persons with disabilities. These are related to the complexity and unresponsiveness that characterizes the representative legislative process and the relative control the state exerts on the third sector. Stimulating growth of the third sector would provide additional impetus for a variety of activities. The state is apprehensive of this and as such has created specific channels from which to regulate non-profit organizations.

Dubai runs one of the most open and transparent governments in the region. There are measures in place to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities but the higher councils are organizations of the government. Barriers to participation in public office are more the result of the political system than particular discrimination. In the government's new expansion and trial of publicly appointed representatives, there is room for supporting or appointing a candidate with a disability to serve on the 40 member Federal National Council. Such action would show that marginalized populations have representation in governance and can make contributions to their country. It would also demonstrate the gradual evolution of the UAE's commitment to democratic processes. Measures taken to encourage participation have failed because of a lack of leadership and because involvement did not apply to all persons with disabilities. The state's lack of engagement with civil society organizations across and beyond the three main categories of impairments (auditory, visual, and physical) and the overrepresentation of parents and underrepresentation of self-advocates provides inadequate representation of interests and results in a sub-optimal process and outcome for all.

From my experiences living and working in the UAE as well as conducting surveys and focus groups in the region, it is evident that disabled people are still viewed by many as outcasts and outsiders. Many consider them to be different and possibly even irresponsible or incapable of carrying out public responsibilities on an equal basis with the general population. This relative distrust of persons with disabilities directly affects the opportunities afforded to them in the area of political and public participation, lowering the general public's expectations of their achievements and indirectly limiting their engagement with public affairs.

In general, professionals should be made aware that more education on the rights of persons with disabilities is needed, particularly for parents, allies, and community members and that such information and understanding of rights is especially important for the individuals themselves. Information regarding basic rights can be communicated through

mass media, rehabilitation centers, health clinics, special education centers and schools, ordinary schools, community development authorities, local advocacy organizations, parents' associations, independent living centers, telephone hotlines, and family physicians. However, the UAE limits the ability of civil society organizations to carry out activities or campaigns without government approval. It is illegal to assemble and form civil society organizations and obtaining these licenses can be difficult and costly for persons with disabilities.

A unique way to stimulate representation would be to appoint four or more persons with disabilities to the 40 members Federal National Council. Government leaders, policymakers, and non-profit professionals should be made aware that individuals with disabilities should benefit from and contribute to national debates and nation-building, in support of Princess Haya's efforts. Political and public participation allows for increased accountability and inclusiveness to be operationalized. The Ruler's office should signal the importance of meaningful public participation by persons with disabilities by encouraging further leadership development by persons with disabilities. Information regarding basic rights and further leadership development should be provided to all organizations working with people with disabilities.

Finally, a concerted effort should be made to put persons with disabilities in charge of centers and organizations that serve them. Increasing representation of persons with disabilities in the governance of these centers would go a long way toward showing that persons with disabilities can govern themselves and contribute to their communities.

Institutional Capacity in Community and Independent Living

People with disabilities are not seen as holders of rights. Far too often they are seen as problems, as opposed to problem solvers. Principal contributing factors include the predominance of cultural-social-family ties and traditions that assign value to family solidarity and look down upon the Westernized concept of family emancipation. Additionally, the weakness of community-based services for people with disabilities perpetuates psychological considerations such as alienation, fear, and social isolation. These factors prevent many persons with disabilities from pursuing their own lives apart from their families, as well as contributing to issues when they attempt to pursue building their own families.

Top-down planning related to community inclusion and independent living appears to be problematic and the Ministry seems to be experiencing long delays. This could be due to a lack of access to adequate knowledge relative to drafting specific regulations and standards (and in monitoring and enforcing compliance) for the independent living facilities in their administration. However, it would be a mistake to simply blame Federal Law No. 29 as currently drafted. It is important to recognize that tradition has a dominant effect on social norms and too often people with disabilities remain bonded to their parents out of necessity and not always out of choice.

The voices of persons with disabilities, or of the determined ones, are resounding louder and more definitively than ever before. This is particularly impressive given that there are explicit measures in place that restrict the establishment of non-governmental organizations and thus the building of a burgeoning civil society. Disability advocacy is thus in its infancy and does not hold an expansive space in the public domain. To make progress in this area, community inclusion, as well as independent living, should be linked to the social development mandates of the National Federal Strategy. Doing so evolves the existing approaches and enables local- and federal-level solutions. A coordinating body such as a community and independent living council could work to guide and stimulate work in this field.

A glimmer of hope exists as new efforts to coordinate state action on disability issues advance. The "My Community…City for Everyone Initiative" has already stimulated the development of 13 new programs across the city of Dubai. Furthermore, these programs support a new local-level law, Dubai Law No. 2, to protect the rights of people with disabilities in Dubai. This law, when supported by a strong implementation strategy and budgets, has the potential to bring much-needed reforms (Table 7.1).

Institutional Capacity in Awareness Raising

Dubai provides a unique case in which to study awareness and public attitudes toward the human rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. Although the government recognizes these rights, it currently does not properly enforce them. As such, clarifying what disability rights are is fundamentally important to their enforcement. The status of persons with disabilities within society is still very low and their role in public life is

Table 7.1 Key objectives of Dubai Law No. 2 of 2014 show a rights-based framework taking place in the Emirate of Dubai; this indicates a shift from a medical to social model of disability framing policy

Year	Law, decree, or mandate	Objective
2014	Dubai Law No. 2 to protect the rights of people with disabilities in the Emirate of Dubai	The law supports Federal Law No. 29 of 2006 concerning the Rights of People of Determination Addresses architectural and social barriers Fosters human capital development for persons with disabilities Preserves dignity and protects against all forms of discrimination and abuse Sets up a high committee to oversee coordination and cooperation across all government sectors

limited. This is because the human rights and fundamental freedoms of persons with disabilities are not fully understood, universally recognized, or respected.

The media in Dubai plays a central role in all public discussions and public debates. Censorship linked to protecting the economic and social standing of the UAE exists but such restrictions would not regularly affect persons with disabilities. The Federal National Media Council tracks articles and actions on behalf of the government that promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the UAE. On their website, they host these and tag articles dealing with People of Determination.[4]

Although guidelines do not formally exist in relation to the portrayal of persons with disabilities in the media, coverage is generally fairly consistent with protecting the human rights and dignity of persons with disabilities. This could be because the media is well developed in the UAE and incorporates international best practices in English language reporting. Nonetheless, the drafting of specific guidelines in this area could work to strengthen and make more consistent the messaging that promotes people's rights and dignities as is mandated by Article 8 of the CRPD. This is especially important in Arabic language reporting, which has been noted

[4] News articles monitored by the National Media Council, under the general heading of Social Development. The council tracks articles along 35 categories; one of these categories is "Disabled." See http://www.uaeinteract.com/news/default.asp?ID=37

to be weaker in its approach and more disparaging in its language. Arabic language guidelines would help avoid such embarrassments if the national media council enforced these guidelines. Since communications channels are not centralized, the National Media Authority and the Ruler's media office could disseminate such guidelines. All government agencies could also review these guidelines to increase consistency in government communication.

Local traditions illuminate how people approach and understand the role of disability in society. Culture and traditions can mobilize parents to identify and meet their children's needs; inversely it can impede a parent's efforts at seeking out support (Dukmak 2009). The UAE should address awareness by broadening the scope of disability history and deliver fresh and dynamic perspectives on the way that disability has been used to legitimate and understand norms, social relations, inequality, and oppression. This should include discourses on disability in Islam, including historical research into individuals, groups, and institutions, as well as representations/constructions and perspectives on disability through time and culture.

Persons with disabilities should be included in the development, marketing, and public outreach initiatives that aim to increase awareness. Increased training of persons with disabilities in communication and media should be strengthened. Only consumer or disabled driven measures will effectively promote the capacity and contribution of persons with disabilities, it cannot be done "for us" it has to be done "by us" or "with us." Until that happens, the messages will continue to fall short of their objective and highlight the potential contribution of persons with disabilities to the workforce and labor market.

Foundational Elements to Accessibility and Mobility

Access to the built environment as well as access to information and communications technologies is central to ensuring, promoting, and protecting the freedoms, rights, and dignity of persons with disabilities. Despite its clear importance; planning, architecture, web development, real estate, and technology professionals were essentially not engaged in this regard until 2016. Only recently have they been made aware that individuals with disabilities have rights and that those rights will be enforced by the government through penalties and fines. Education and awareness regarding accessibility standards and guidelines are important, and corrective measures should be pursued if those rights are not respected.

There currently exists only a limited capacity to identify barriers and obstacles to accessibility in public facilities and services. The only measures in place are essentially *ad hoc* appeals and responses. This lack of a formal process proves to be a very costly, haphazard, and ineffective way of dealing with such problems. There are no appropriate or comprehensive standards and guidelines for the accessibility of public services and facilities in the Emirate of Dubai.

According to Issasm El Aloui, an architect and planner working in Dubai Municipality in 2009, the local government had on file a 19-page document that refers to all building codes under the jurisdiction of the municipality.[5] According to him, these guidelines provided the municipality a minimum set of standards that were not promoted and often not enforced. Such weak standards attracted criticism for being weak, vague, and nonspecific. By 2010, the neighboring Emirate of Abu Dhabi has mandated that the International Building Codes (IBC) be used in all new construction in Abu Dhabi, but did not develop their own codes. In 2017, the Government of Dubai's The Executive Council launched the Dubai Universal Design Code. The purpose of the Code is to regulate the design, construction, and management of Dubai's built environment and transportation systems. The Code specifies a set of standards and shows how people with disabilities and others can approach, enter, use, egress from, and evacuate independently a range of public places from buildings to bus stops. The Code leverages European, American, and Asian accessibility standards to ensure the built environment is constructed and utilized in an equitable and dignified manner, to the greatest extent possible, in line with the Universal Design principles. Currently, the Dubai Universal Design Code is on its way to becoming the Federal standard for construction.

Standards and guidelines for accessibility do not necessarily apply equally to all government and private entities providing public services and facilities. The hotel sector is challenged by provisions to ensure 10% of all rooms incorporate inclusive design features. Government entities must continue to seek out knowledge, to build capacity, and generate awareness of the progress they are making. Accessibility standards once passed need to be effectively measured, promoted, and enforced equally

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[5] Just before publishing this manuscript, I came across a larger more comprehensive document entitled Dubai Building and Construction Codes for 2004. These codes, however, failed to mention access or accessibility in the context of disability or special needs.

for public and private entities. Non-compliance should be adequately reported, identified, and resolved through formal administrative and judicial processes.

With regard to improving mobility services, factors such as a lack of locally based technical skills and knowledge are related to the complexity and unresponsiveness that characterizes the delivery system for mobility services. Social workers, rehabilitation and healthcare professionals, special educators, and service provider professionals should proactively promote mobility products and services available in the country. This includes both awareness programs identifying service providers and how these can be accessed as well as advertising ways of making these products and services more widely available in the UAE.

The Ministry of Community Development and the Community Development Authority in Dubai are not capable of implementing widespread changes in the mobility sector directly. However, their role as a purveyor of information would have a great impact on the local community of persons with disabilities in Dubai and the greater UAE. Additionally, the CDA could implement innovative partnerships with local organizations and invest in scaling up mobility solutions like wayfinding. Such services could include training professionals in the field of rehabilitation and special education and mobility training for individuals with physical, hearing, and intellectual disabilities in conjunction with the ecosystem of local organizations and service centers.

Conclusion

Local experts that I interviewed in 2013 and again in 2014 indicated that, in the four years between 2009 and 2013, little to no substantive progress had been made in the implementation or enforcement of the national laws on the local level. The evidence points to the fact that for a majority of government workers, disability is seen as a priority, and as an area that requires renewed attention. However, the concepts and specific guidance on how to bring about meaningful change are only now taking shape. The persistent challenge is that disability is still poorly understood and disability studies or disability rights advocacy does not have a proper platform or home in Dubai. Unless the dominant perception of disability changes from a medical abnormality or tragedy completely independent of the physical and social environment, to a failure between an individual and his/her environment, little meaningful progress can truly be made.

Additionally, the Emirate of Dubai has sufficient administrative but insufficient coordinating capacity to address disability from a development perspective.

An additional two factors must also be addressed: the lack of robust policy-based research on disability; and the prominence of marketing policy intentions. Furthermore, when public attitudes are brought under scrutiny, we begin to uncover that dominant social attitudes in Dubai are strongly congruent to international norms along dimensions of basic functionings (affording education, health, and employment) but are strongly incongruent along with basic freedoms (affording independent living, and political and public participation). When these factors are combined—the lack of policy-based research, the lack of sustained funding, and the lack of understanding and awareness of key areas such as independent living and public participation—this in effect deprives persons with disabilities of their rights. Furthermore, it deprives them of the basic capabilities for contributing to their city and enjoying the type of life that they have reason to value. Additional work needs to be done to continuously assess progress across sectors and scales. Doing so will allow local officials to implement more targeted interventions. Transformative actions can be stimulated by the "City for Everyone" initiative, and such efforts can substantially improve outcomes.

For example, the "City for Everyone" initiative should establish a stronger autonomous council led by people with disabilities to monitor and assess progress and build capacity across different sectors and scales of government. Additionally, all substantive efforts must ensure that persons with disabilities participate in the development of policies and laws that affect them. I argue that only when the interconnectedness of multiple barriers is identified can planners begin to steer contemporary cities toward more inclusive urban futures. Understanding the history of past efforts also provides additional context and allows government officials to avoid repeating costly mistakes. Measuring this transformation is highly relevant at the national and sub-national levels. Assessing performance in disability rights at these levels is of critical importance. Doing so helps cities determine the progress made and evaluate the impact and sustainability of urban policies.

The past ten years have seen an immense shift in perception and mindset on the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. Just a decade ago it was not unusual to know and hear of families that would not reveal publicly that they have a family member with a disability. This would

essentially result in a person being confined to the family home under the care of full-time hired help, rarely integrating even in larger family functions, gatherings, or travel plans. The shame associated was palpable. However, today it is possible to think that such occurrences and mindsets are the exceptions rather than the rule. Public perceptions have shifted markedly, as has been confirmed by the Community Development Authority's Dubai Social Survey, now in its fourth iteration since 2008.

Dr. Sandra Willis stated that three key events took place that catalyzed the significant shifts in the perceptions of people with disabilities in Dubai and the UAE from a medical and charity model to a rights/social model. First, it was the direct engagement of the leadership with the disability community. She recalls the impact of first seeing the images of the Dubai Crown Prince, H.H. Sheikh Hamdan Bin Mohammed, and his brother, H.H. Sheikh Mansoor Bin Mohammed, playing wheelchair basketball with people with disabilities and other top government officials in Dubai. The second was the announcement by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid, the Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, announcing that all people with disabilities will be referred to as People of Determination. Finally, the hosting of the Special Olympics World Games in the UAE was transformative in shifting attitudes and highlighting the talents and capabilities of people with disabilities.

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