

Tourism For All in Lebanon

Presentation abstract

Tourism is one of the main economic growth and entertainment resources in Lebanon. The country enjoys vast number of resources of natural and historical heritage, and attracts massive numbers of international and domestic tourists around the year. Thousands of tourism businesses are setup to serve this sector. In addition, other sectors provide indirect services to visiting tourists. These businesses offer employment opportunities for hundred thousands of families around the country. However, despite its success and well developed infrastructure, Lebanon's tourism sector still does not comply with standards of accessibility for persons with disabilities. Decision makers within the tourism sector have not recognized the significance of adopting standards of accessibility and disability inclusion. Persons with disabilities have no opportunities to enjoy their country's natural and historical heritage, and thus fulfill their leisure interests on equal bases with others. In addition, they find themselves excluded from relevant opportunities of employment and business enterprise, in order to achieve decent livelihood conditions.

Started in 2016, the Inclusive tourism Project in Lebanon is a two year initiative incorporating accessibility and inclusion standards in four touristic sites around the country including: the old market of Byblos city, the Beach of Tyre, Shouf Biosphere Reserve, and Baalbeck. It is run by LUPD and its partner the European Network of Accessible Tourism (ENAT). Using the two partners' expertise, the project is creating necessary plans and modules for incorporating accessibility provisions in the aforementioned sites, such as ramps, braille and audio systems, and appropriate spatial standards. Number of hotels, restaurants, and beach resorts have already adopted these modules. Benefiting from LUPD's partnership legacy with the private sector, the project is conducting periodical training workshops for workers of the four site's touristic institutions on the practice of inclusion. In addition, the project has launched a national advocacy platform to work with relevant public and private sector entities on creating enforcement strategies for the inclusive tourism standards according to Beirut Declaration.

The project pursues the innovative approach of recognizing the economic benefit of accessible and inclusive tourism. By being interactive towards relevant public and private sector entities, the project is promoting the economic benefits of adopting standards of inclusive tourism. The combination of architectural modules, training workshops, and technical consultations represent this innovative interaction approach. The project also recognizes the economic development benefit of inclusive tourism for persons with disabilities as well. For the project, persons with disabilities should have access to touristic resources not only as tourists, but also as workers and business entrepreneurs. This innovative approach towards inclusive tourism is derived from the project's concentrated pioneering efforts in rural areas where means of accessibility and inclusion are mostly ignored. The project's innovative asset is represented in the triangular approach of knowledge, advocacy, and pilot initiatives towards promoting accessible and inclusive tourism institutions for PWDs as both beneficiaries and contributors.

The project's first year has had a positive impact on public and private sector stakeholders' commitment towards supporting the adoption of inclusive tourism policy. This commitment was translated into the endorsement of Beirut Declaration as the first national document on inclusive tourism in Lebanon, which used the first summit we attended in 2014 as a reference to its recommendations, which will serve as a tool for advancing and processing regulations and relevant policies.

The project as mentioned earlier, mobilized and provided the necessary technical support for the local authorities, and stakeholders to complete the accommodations of the target areas, of which two areas are in their final stages. The project, until now, was able to accommodate the public beach, the religious shrine, the public park, the beach trip and Hotels (final stages) and offered recommendations to accommodate the famous temple of Baalbeck, as well as signing an agreement protocol with a taxi service company to ensure accessible transportation.

The projects' achievements do not stop here. The project provided training sessions to relevant public and private sector – of which are the syndicate of touristic guides, syndicate of hotel owners, municipalities and relevant stakeholders- on inclusion, disability and employment, in addition to the methodologies of inclusion in companies that signed the agreement protocols to change its standards and become inclusive.

Finally, the project provided employment for 27 PWDs, 47 job opportunities, 33 training opportunities and 4 SMEs.

Lead speaker : Silvana Lakkis

Organisation : Lebanese Union for People with physical Disabilities LUPD previously Lebanese Physically Handicap Union LPHU

City (Country) : Beirut(Lebanon)

Biography : Silvana Lakkis has been active with LUPD since 1986. Currently, she has been the acting President of LUPD and Chairperson of the Regional Arab bureau of Disabled People's International and has used her renowned expertise to further implement campaigns and projects dealing with inclusive policies. She has provided consultations to the Ministries of Education, Information, Labor, Social Affairs, Public Works and Transportation, Finance and has been recently appointed as a consultant for The Minister of Social Affairs on disability issues related to inclusion and disability rights. This elections she has been appointed to be a member of the Lebanese electoral supervisory committee

2nd speaker :

Organisation :

City (Country) : ()

Biography :