

Early Detection and Assessment of Disability

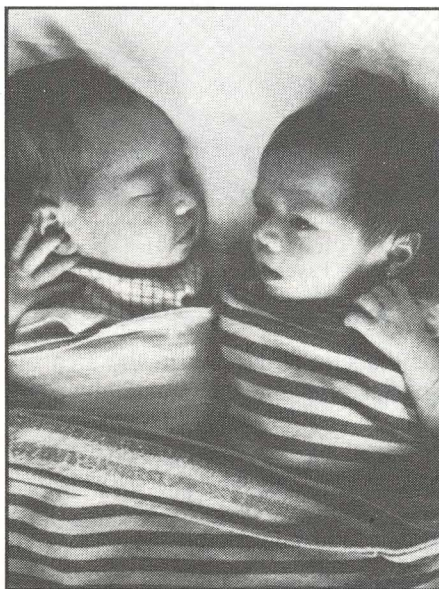
IWSAW Series of Lectures on Special Education

Beirut University College

For a long time, disabled people with special needs have been neglected. Little governmental and educational attention has been given to people with special needs and most of the existing institutions seem to be operated and funded by individuals, private enterprises as well as philanthropic and funding agencies.

Most disabled in Lebanon live with their families and only about 3000 are reported to live in institutions. The trend of disability is characterized by an increase in the incidence of physical insults due to war injuries, adding to this the psychological disturbances caused by fear and anxiety as well as neurological problems especially in infants and children. Some informal studies estimate the number of disabled to reach 5% of the total population and other studies raise this estimate to 10% covering all age groups, and regions, including handicaps due to chronic illness. A survey conducted in 1981 concluded that there are an estimated 43,896 disabled persons in Lebanon, keeping in mind that the whole population is little over 2 million.⁽¹⁾

The issue of disability is receiving more attention today than it has ever before. Many efforts have been directed during the last few years towards improving the status of the disabled in Lebanon. The physically disabled (especially the war injured) are receiving the greatest help followed by the sensory and finally mentally disabled population. The



attention, however, is only a fraction of what is really needed especially for children in their early years.⁽²⁾

In light of this situation, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW), Beirut University College in collaboration with World Rehabilitation Fund (WRF) organized a series of lectures on Special Education in 1992 which continue into 1993. The purpose of these lectures is to create public awareness and offer sound guidelines and information for detection, assessment, rehabilitation and

intervention.

Early Detection and Assessment of Disability was the topic of the panel discussion of November 25, 1992. The speakers were Dr. Imad Melki, a Pediatrician and Associate Professor in the School of Medicine at St. Joseph University, and Dr. Omeyma Yakteen a Psychologist and Professor at the American University of Beirut. The Dean of Beirut University College, Dr. Raja Hajjar, welcomed the audience and panelists and asserted the University's plan to establish a curriculum for Special Education. Both speakers stressed awareness as the first step towards detection and prevention.

Early Intervention and Psycho-Social Counselling for Parents and Care Givers of the Handicapped was the topic of the panel discussion of January 27, 1993. Two speakers who work in leading institutions for disabled people: 1) Ms. Hana Nassif a certified nurse and specialized social worker; and 2) Ms. Rita Merhej, a psychologist and specialized social

The schedule and topics of the coming lectures are:

February 17, 1993:
Language Disorders and
Speech Therapy

March 31, 1993: Physio-
therapy

April 28, 1993:
Occupational Therapy.

worker as well; spoke of the importance of early intervention and coordination between the parents, the psychologist, the social worker and the speech, occupational and physio-therapists.

It is worth noting, that as a result of the awareness created by such activities and other mobilizing events, issues of Special Education and attention to people with special needs are gaining ground in Lebanon. Specialized organizations and institutions are more visible than in the past probably due to a growing population of people with special needs or maybe even due to greater awareness among parents and schools for these services. Furthermore, the new Lebanese Cabinet created a portfolio for Disabled People. Thus far, the Minister has reviewed existing facilities, is surveying the situation and preparing for concrete action. The First Lady and the wife of the Speaker of Parliament are in the process of building a medical center



left to right: Ms. Hana Nasif, Ms. Hana Salem on Early Intervention and Psycho-Social Counselling for Parents and Care givers of the Handicapped

for diabetic children. In the area of Special Education, Beirut University College and the American University of Beirut are introducing a curriculum for special educators. Hopefully, people themselves will make an effort to care and understand the problems

of people with special needs

R.A.H

(1) Mufarij, Rita: Special Report, Beirut 1988.

(2) Special Report and Proposal for action by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World.



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