



International Telecommunication Union

*Telecommunication Development Bureau*

**“Regional Innovation Center on ICT Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities”**

<b>Location(s)</b>	Egypt
<b>Expected duration</b>	2 years
<b>Estimated Budget</b>	Total: <b>USD 300,000</b>
<b>Implementing Agency</b>	International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
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**Brief Description:**

This project comes in implementation of the WTDC 14 Arab Regional Initiative titled “Ensuring Access to Telecommunications/ICTs, in Particular for Persons with Disabilities”. This project aims to establish a Regional ICT Center for Persons with Disabilities for the Arab Region. The goal is to set up a center to support countries in the region in their efforts to promote ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities. The establishment of an Arab Regional Centre was suggested by MCIT in February 2014 to bring forward its specialized work in empowering persons with disabilities to neighboring countries. In this connection, and in view of ITU's ICT Accessibility related initiatives in the region to promote the development of ICT accessibility policies, regulations, and strategies customized to the Arab world; MCIT has suggested the establishment of a regional center to support the implementation of the related ITU regional initiative. The center will promote the development of accessible ICT tools for Arabic speaking PwDs; (promote internationally adopted standards in the region, and develop skills and knowledge in the areas of ICT accessibility). This would be done through a variety of activities, including training programs, sharing of best practices, creating platforms for exchange of applications and promoting strategies and policies for ICT accessibility and encouraging relevant stakeholders to collaborate on regional projects, providing

advisory services in this domain based on demand from countries and supporting innovators in developing ICT tools for PWDs.

## **1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank (WB) (World Report on Disability, 2011), 15% of the world's total population, over one billion people, live with some form of disability. The number of PWDs in the Arab world is estimated to be more than 50 million. Such remarkable underprivileged strata of societies are excluded from social and economic activities, which leads to societal divides and the absence of social justice. Such unprivileged populations are in dire need of ICT solutions to support their empowerment, independence and inclusion. Promoting ICT accessibility and according to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), empowering them by ensuring their active participation in all walks of life, including employment, education and social inclusion and therefore providing them with rich and independent lives ~~to~~[will help them](#) contribute positively to their societies. Furthermore, persons with disabilities in the Arab region have very limited access to accessible ICTs or ICT-based assistive technologies (AT). In addition, available ICT solutions need to be customized to the needs of PWDs in the Arab world and must be tailored to support the Arabic language. Such technologies, if available, are expensive and, in most cases, are not affordable to PWDs. Moreover, the available accessible ICT solutions which support the Arabic language are not as good as similar technologies available in English and other languages due to very limited competition among companies.

The lack of tailored e-accessibility policies and standards that require or encourage public and private organizations to make environments, services, and products more accessible is another obstacle which greatly limits the inclusion and independence of PWDs.

### **Overall Objective**

The main objective of the project is to establish an Arab Regional ICT Center for Persons with Disabilities to promote ICT Accessibility in the Arab region as well as assist stakeholders in the region to support the inclusion and empowerment of PWDs in the Arab region through the development and provision of affordable and customized accessible ICT tools.

### **Project Strategy**

The project will promote ICTs accessibility in the Arab region and establish a regional ICT center for PWDs. The targeted Center will focus on:

- Promoting the development of accessible ICT policies, regulations and strategies;
- Encourage and support the development of ICT tools for persons with disabilities in the Arab Region;
- Promoting best practices on ICT accessibility;
- Training ICT developers and designers on the development of accessible ICT tools for persons with disabilities;

The main goal of the Regional ICT Center for PWDs is to support the inclusion and empowerment of PWDs in the Arab region through the development and provision of affordable and customized accessible ICT tools. The center will capitalize on and benefit from the diverse experience of different Arab countries and relevant regional and international organizations inside and outside the Arab region in order to improve the conditions of persons with disabilities using ICTs, support Arab countries to share knowledge, success stories, and best practices; and raise the Arab local communities' awareness about the importance of ICT accessibility for persons with disabilities, and thus help Arab Governments implement the UN CRPD. Aiming at bridging the socio-economic gap for persons with disabilities, the Arab Regional center for ICTs for PWDs will ultimately support them to realize their independence, and lead active and purposeful lives within their communities. The project will draw on the technical expertise of the key partners and their broad network of specialists.

### **Expected Results**

The following Results are expected:

1. Arab Regional ICT centre for persons with disabilities established.
2. Training curriculum for developers and designers on accessible ICT software, mobile apps and accessible websites developed.
3. Framework for ICT accessibility policies, laws and regulations for the Arab Region based on the ITU Model ICT Accessibility Policy Report developed.
4. Arab ICT developers and designers in different Arab companies, including from start-ups and SMEs trained and received mentoring to enable them to develop accessible software and mobile applications for persons with disabilities in the Arab region.
5. Capacity built among Arab policy makers, regulators, and organizations of persons with special needs on developing and implementing accessible ICT policies, laws and regulations.
6. Awareness sessions and knowledge sharing held with the participation of decision makers and stakeholders from Arab countries
7. Website/Portal for promoting and sharing the project news and outputs
8. Announced winners of ICT for PWDs regional innovation competitions.

### **Management and Partnership**

The project will be managed by the ITU Project Manager in close collaboration with the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology of Egypt as the main partner and host of the regional center. The ITU shall be the implementing agency.

### **Budget**

The proposed budget of the project is USD **300,000** and this includes covering the costs of the establishment of the regional center, expert recruitment's, training, travel and some of the key activities of the regional center to launch its activities in the region.