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ICT Accessibility Capacity Building
Qatar Assistive Technology Center - Mada

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>> Recording in progress.

>> Mohamed: In the name of Allah, most merciful and gracious, ladies and gentlemen, experts and speakers, ladies and gentlemen, our followers through Zoom video in this session, which is organized by Mada, Qatar Assistive Technology Center - Mada. Peace and blessings be upon you. I am delighted to welcome you in this virtual session organized by Qatar Assistive Technology Center in Qatar - Mada. Among of the event of the WSIS Forum. Actually, Mada Center organized this session in collaboration with Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, so welcome to all of you. WSIS Forum this year will follow the title of "ICTs for well-being and inclusiveness to accelerate the improvement in achieving the

Sustainable Development Goals." Today's session will talk about the ICT accessibility capacity building. I am pleased and would like to join hosts who will share their initiatives and projects' activities which they contribute in achieving in their countries. We will have local contributions, national contributions, as well as international contributions. We would like to start the first session with speaker from Mada, followed by speaker from Qatar, and then from KSA, and then from Kuwait University, and then from Alexandria University. And finally, a representative from G3ict.

I will welcome each speaker and give intro to them before their contribution, but I would like to introduce this session to you. As I have mentioned before, this session is under the title of ICT Accessibility Capacity Building, and when we are talking about accessibility, I would like to remind you with that framework and the international obligations that are the framework of the initiatives that countries can work on it.

I would like to mention firstly the Sustainable Development Goals for this year in the WSIS Forum. The Sustainable Development Goals that is connected with ICT and ICT accessibility can be summarized in these four goals mentioned on this slide. Goal #4 is Quality Education. Also, Goal #10, reduced inequality. And Goal #11, sustainable cities & communities.

Also, I would like to remind about Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, especially Article 9 about accessibility, and Article 21, as well as Article 24. In this framework, also I would like to mention the Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 28 about equal opportunity for ICT accessibility as well as Marrakesh Treaty to facilitate access to published works for persons who are blind, visually impaired, as well as other treaties as well as national authorities.

This is on the international obligation. On the national and domestic level, there are many legal frameworks that encourage everyone to support and develop the ICT accessibility. I would like to mention but not limited to law number 2 of the year 2004 for persons with disabilities, as well as the Disability Inclusion Strategy, and actually, Qatar Assistive Technology Mada is encouraging especially this domain and this field, and it is a private institution which established in 2010 as an initiative to support the digital inclusiveness and to build a technology community that supports persons with disabilities. And the envision is to improve the ICT capacity in Qatar and abroad, as well as to unlock the full potential of persons with disabilities through building capacities and support the digital platforms, to access digital platforms, so the community will be able to use the technology and the accessibility as well as the targeted audience, and developers can develop services and technology that is accessible.

So when you are talking about building capacity in ICT, I would like to review and sum up what have been issues from frameworks in terms of building capacities worldwide in this domain. And we would like to review the DARE Index, which is G3ict. This report

is an index to evaluate their Index, which is Disability Accessibility Rights Index. This report has many results that embody the status that usability of ICT and the role of countries in implementing what have been agreed upon. And their agreement. So I chose some key findings that related to capacity building, and it was mentioned in that report that there is a lack in the lessons, content, and educational content about the ICT accessibility. And from the main reasons that was mentioned, amongst others, were the challenges and hardships that stakeholders find in organization among all sectors, like the government and private sectors.

Why I am mentioning this is all the results was a supporter and motivation in Mada Center to launch a project that called to develop capacities around ICT and inclusive design. The general framework or competency framework is to provide all the stakeholders all the support, as well as support the educational bodies and authorities in terms of inclusive design. So this framework is a reference framework to develop the educational and the inclusive framework. The framework includes six competencies, which is identifying the disability and accessibility; analyzing the legal framework of the disability; and to identify the inclusive design as well as create digital content, accessible content; and developing accessible content. That framework is available on the website of ICTMada.qa, and it's available in Arabic and English, as well as the competency framework is available on the Open Resources as educational standards, and you can use it to search other.

We are about to develop a global network that has all the training materials about the digital accessibility and inclusive design, and I would like to mention and to extend my thanks to the team who worked on this framework, which are Arab experts in the field of ICT who contributed to developing and evaluating the competency framework.

Here is some research publications about this framework in ICT accessibility. And welcome. I would like to welcome all the collaboration and partnership requests that support the usage of this framework in order to support the ICT accessibility in the training and educational programmes.

So back to our session. I would like to give the floor to the speakers, experts who are contributing in this session to share their experience and projects in regards to ICT accessibility.

In the beginning, I would like to give the floor to Ms. Al Jazi Nasser, the Head of ICT Access Accreditation and Training Section in Mada.

Ms. Al Jazi has obtained the bachelor degree from Hamad Ben Halifa University. Al Jazi is an advocate for persons with disabilities and believe to transition all of the content to accessible content for persons with disabilities. She enrolled in this field in 2017 to -- in order to obtain the ICT accessibility and facilitate it to all persons with disabilities. Ms. Al Jazi, you will speak to us about all the services that Mada supports in order to provide the training and capability-building services. So

the floor is yours.

>> AL JAZI AL-JABOR: In the beginning, I would like to thank you for the moderation. I will focus my speak on the training and capacity-building services and all the related services to it.

I would like to remind the attendees that they can hear the English interpretation of the session through clicking on the Interpretation and change the language from Arabic to English or vice versa. Through interpretation, and also there is a sign language, Qatari sign language as well.

In the beginning, I would like to introduce you about Mada Assistive Technology Center, an institution established in 2010 with the aim of supporting digital inclusive and to build a technology community accessible for persons with disabilities and elderly people. The Center works through strategic collaboration in terms of digital support through supporting the digital platform to develop mobile applications according to the digital accessibility global standard, which is WCAG 2.1 A and AA. As well as submit and provide consultancy in this regard. As well as Mada works on increased awareness on the Mada programmes and as well as to provide equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in the digital community.

Mada is an excellent centre in digital accessibility in Arabic language worldwide. Mada Center achieved a percentage, accessibility percentage of 84% on the national level. And it was achieved the first rank in the DARE Index.

Mada works through strategic contributions in education, culture, and this to achieve activities to support persons with disabilities. We work to achieve these goals through activities and services. Activities such as innovation, increased awareness, policies, research, and publications. And for services, it is the digital accessibility services, training and capacity building, consultancy services, assistive technology services.

As I have mentioned, the focus will be on capacity building.

For training and capacity building, we believe in Mada that capacity building and continuous training in ICT is obligatory, and we should support and provide the support to the persons with disabilities. In these terms, Mada is keen to design and provide a number of training programmes around assistive technology and digital solutions, in addition to policies and best practices in ICT. The programmes and training programmes are provided in this field to increase the awareness of the ICT accessibility. And there is programmes provided to persons with disabilities to provide empowering them and to provide high quality for persons with disabilities from academia or scholars in this field.

In the beginning, I would like to talk about Mada for open training programme. It is a number of workshops that provided through the year, 12 months, and some of those workshops are provided, a variety of workshops, about ICT accessibility, policies, and best practices in ICT sector. The registration for these workshops is done through the Mada website as well as Mada sent a number of

invitations to those workshops in country amongst different sectors, governmental and civil organizations or private organizations for the training programmes. The content of it provided according to the best practices and the global standards.

Our aim from this programme is to build the capacity of persons with disabilities to use the ICT accessibility as well as to raise the awareness of the community in regards with ICT technology. And also to build capacities to improve the quality of submitted services to persons with disabilities.

For the open training programme, it's contributed by governmental authorities, private and community, and as I have mentioned previously, you can visit the website for registration for the training workshops. It's varied. Some of them are long distance, and others through attendance in training halls. Most remarkable research from this training programme through the year 2021, we realized the popularity of this programme among the community, and the governmental authorities were considering it for this training through the website's mobile applications, as well as service tools. Also other effect and good practices of this programme was implementing the practices and recommendations in regards with ICT, for example, for the educational content in the classroom. Also to implement the ICT standards on different digital platforms.

For the recommendations, there is circulation of programmes and to support the submitted training workshops in order to spread the awareness and knowledge about ICT accessibility.

The second project is the strategic partners training, which is a number of series of programmes and workshops for strategic partners in ICT accessibility according to their needs. The goals of this programme in the educational sector is to increase the awareness of the inclusive education and the digital knowledge and also to enable the accessibility to education from all the students, including persons with disability.

In the aspect of culture and community sector to enable the accessibility to services in the community from persons with disability. The contributed authorities is governmental authorities is Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Qatar Foundation, several universities, community college, and among cultural sector, there is Supreme Committee for Projects and Legacy, Minister of Transportation, Qatar Tourist, Qatar Rail, and Qatar Central Bank.

The good practices of this programme, we have realized, considered from institutions and education and cultural sectors, to improve the accessibility of persons with disabilities for the results in the education. We have provided training for almost 118 trainees. And for culture, we empowered 97 trainees in culture domain. For the recommendations, we adapt different organizations and their recommendations and best practices in ICT accessibility as well as following up those organizations to build the employees' capacities in ICT and as well as to support the strategic partners.

The second programme initiative is specialized training programme. Mada has provided a number of programmes in ICT accessibility for the accredited programmes to provide accredited programmes in specific domains. For example, in education or employment and others. I will talk about the main programme in education that's from Ministry of Education and Higher Education. And also the employment programme to facilitate the employment opportunities. And the goal of it is to build the capacities of experts in this field to support persons with disabilities.

We have the programme of super users that focus to enable and empower.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: There is one minute left.

>> AL JAZI AL-JABOR: The focus of this programme is to build the capacity of this program in expert to use assistive technology. And I would like to mention that Mada has trained 84 experts in this field. We have the employment facility, and we have trained almost 10 professionals in this field and persons with disability to unlock their potential.

Finally, we have a training programme which is a programme in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. We have trained almost 154 trainees with total hours of 62 hours to provide the educational content in inclusive approach and to improve the educational environment. The main achievements is that Mada collaborated with a number of academic institutions in Qatar to provide the ICT accessibility. We have provided three programmes starting from Hamad bin Khalifa University with ICT accessibility programme, and A Web for Everyone from Carnegie Mellon University Qatar, and finally, ICT Community of Qatar.

As I have mentioned previously, to -- their index, there is a lack of educational content for ICT accessibility, so we supported and provided this programme to close this gap and to raise the awareness.

And sorry for taking much time, and if there is any questions, I would be delighted to answer.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Thank you, Al Jazi, for your presentation. A quick reminder for English speakers. We offer translation to English language. You need just to click on the icon interpretation at the bottom of the Zoom interface and to switch language. We offer also live transcription, captioning, in English language. I think the technical moderator has already shared the link, just you need to click on this link to get the English captioning.

So in the following contribution is by Dena Al-Thani. Hi, Dr. Dena. Dr. Dena is Associate Professor in Faculty of Engineering at Hamad Bin Khalifa University. She has PhD from London University, and she is a member in the Arab Experts in the ICT. And Dr. Dena is keen to see the effect of her research in terms of the technology on humans, and she published her research in scientific publications. And she is doing research in ICT accessibility field. So Dr. Dena, you will speak to us in regards with the initiatives that support

the efforts, the national and international efforts to develop the capacity building in ICT accessibility. And you will provide us with an introduction background about the research projects as well.

>> DENA AL-THANI: Thank you, Doctor. I will share the slides.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Al Jazi, did you stop sharing your slides?

>> AL JAZI AL-JABOR: I will stop sharing.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Dr. Dena, do you hear me?

There is an IT issue, and we are working on solving it right now. Dr. Dena?

>> DENA AL-THANI: Can you hear me now? And can you see my slides?

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: The slides not yet.

>> DENA AL-THANI: That's very strange. I am sharing, actually.

>> When you pressed "share screen," did you pick the file you would like to share?

>> DENA AL-THANI: Yes, actually, I can see it shared. Let me share it again. Can you see it now?

In the beginning, I would like to thank Mada for this invitation and Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, and Dr. No -- Dr. Mohamed for your kind introduction. It is my privilege to speak with such experts not only in Qatar, but in the world and worldwide.

The University is established as a member of the Qatar Foundation in 2020, and it aims to be a scientific place for the entire city, and the vision was to have the university be a distinguished organization in the Arab region and worldwide and to support the development plan in Qatar. The University does research, and all of the programmes are postgraduate studies. 33 programmes range from master and PhD, and also there is a bachelor in computer engineering.

Associate Professor on the faculty of Science and Engineering, and when I started my work at the University, my aim was to establish and to design technologies that are suitable for human usage. And when we think about the human and how he deals with technology, the environment and capacity, all of it are influencing the approach the human is dealing with technology. And we see technology everywhere around us, so that's why our work as researchers is important to design techniques and technologies around the human. The human should be the focal point of those designs. And accordingly, we thought about the different capacities of the human. And firstly, I consult with persons with disabilities, with sight disability at master and PhD. And then when I joined the Hamad Bin Khalifa University, I wrenched for the others as well as elderly and deaf, and we have looked at inclusive design that is suitable for different contexts and sensitive for users.

So this is background information about our research group. The vision and mission of our group is to collaborate with experts, and we established collaborations with Mada, who was the first and

leader of the collaborations that are concerned with persons with disability as well as disability centres, and we started to form those partnerships and to understand these needs. And we provide the scholarships from Qatar fund, who were very supportive in designing in terms of technology. And we got scholarship from Mada as well as other centres we collaborated with. And with the development of the new techniques in regards with the virtual reality as well. And there were a number of partnerships in community. For example, the autism group and the private schools as well. And after the establishment of these projects, we started to work to establish the next generation of researchers who are interested to design technologies that has the human as the focal point of their designs.

Our group, our scientific group, after six years, became huge. There are three from the faculty staff, and three researchers as the PhD. And we have graduated three graduates from a PhD programme, and we have right now another three. And also we have graduated master degree scholars with whom I am honored to work.

Our research considerations are four, which are inclusive design, and this was the first concept we looked into when we studied the human usage of technology and disability accessibility; and artificial intelligence. And it became an approach to access the digital accessibility. And also, the supported reality, it's an approach to reach the inclusive design in the education, and I would give some example of this.

To sum up today, I chose only to research to talk about. If anyone interested in this regard would like to invite them to communicate with me, so I chose the most advanced projects to give an idea about the scientific research at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, and it would be as a project that serves humanity.

One of the first projects we worked on was to evaluate the attention of autism children during learning. The evaluation of the attention starts with pictures from Qatar Foundation schools, which is the concerned academy that teach the children, and the idea of it that teachers came to ask if the child is paying enough attention, and what are the indicators that specify if that child is taking attention or not.

We thought to use artificial intelligence through using and measuring the physical expressions to identify the attention behaviors, and as you see, the diagram that shows and embodies the process in different images so we would know if the children are paying attention or not. The contributing universities and the Qatar Fund for Scientific Research, also there are a lot of scientific research. And we developed an application to be used.

The second project is an application which we designed with collaboration with Shafala Center, and it is using 3D symbols that we would like to thank Mada, who supported the design of those symbols to utilize its usage. And the goal of it, so use learning to develop the skills of the children and the contribution authorities are Shafala Center, Mada Center, and Qatar Fund to sponsor the scientific research. There are a lot of scientific research that experience

the user experience with application, and we are now working on the second vision of this project and who would like to communicate with us, we would like to invite them.

The last initiative which I am proud of, which is the beginning for more inclusive initiatives, is the ICT Accessibility for bachelor degree of computer engineering. And I used a Mada framework in developing competency in regards with ICT accessibility, and it was the base and the foundation to design this curriculum. And the goals of this initiative is to introduce the importance of ICT accessibility, how they can develop digital accessible content and to know the different usages of the assistive technology and to understand the inclusion design concept. The contributed authorities so far, they are Hamad Bin Khalifa University and Mada Center. My vision is to develop this initiative with other Arab universities and on the worldwide scale, and as Dr. Mohamed and Ms. Al Jazi mentioned, to have content in terms of the ICT accessibility. And thank you for listening.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Thank you, Dr. Dena. It is important projects and remarkable projects, and I hope there is regional and international collaboration to highlight and spotlight those projects and the importance of information support to support ICT accessibility capacity building.

Now to the third speaker, from King Saud University, Saudi Arabia. Dr. Hend Al-Khalifa, we are happy to have you to share Saudi experience. Welcome, Doctor. Dr. Hend Al-Khalifa is the Professor of Information and Technology at King Saud University, and she is a researcher. And she published more than 107 scientific research and international conferences. Dr. Hend works as a researcher, and she is working in King Saud University Publication unit, and she contributed a number of regional and international conferences. And she specialized in Arabic language treatment for digital content.

Dr. Hend Al-Khalifa will talk with us about the Saudi experience in field of ICT accessibility. Dr. Hend, the floor is yours.

>> HEND AL-KHALIFA: Dr. Mohamed, thank you for this introduction. In the name of Allah, most merciful and gracious, I will speak with you in ten minutes about the Saudi experience, specifically at King Saud University in ICT accessibility. I would like to start with statistics for the disability advocacy. According to the Saudi statistics authority, there are 1.4 million persons with disabilities from 32 million persons, which are 52% are males, and 47% of them female. And the disabilities are mobility or hearing. And the major disability is mobility and sight disability.

I would like to mention the persons with disabilities rights in KSA. In Saudi, the government is considered to provide well-being life of persons with disabilities and to take into consideration their needs. And the law was, in its constitution, in law #26, to protect the quality between persons, especially persons with disabilities. We found many programmes that were provided by Saudi.

I will not mention all of them, but I will mention the main and remarkable front item.

Firstly, the general education and to provide support through migration, we have an inclusive system for that in general education, and I would like to highlight the platform of Madrasati through COVID-19, who provided support for persons with disabilities and their families for reaching and accessing the educational content. And for higher education, we have inclusive system to provide learning opportunities for persons with disabilities. And I would like to mention the role of King Saud University. We have a year to prepare the persons with disabilities, to prepare them and to close the gap between them and their peers. And also there are a number of initiatives, and also I would like to mention the employment of persons with disabilities in Saudi. We have a programme for human resources development, as well as Mama system and Kadrhoun, which is a network concerned with persons with disability, and they have objective end goal to provide a unified platform for persons with disability.

And I would like to mention one last point in regards with human capacities developing programmes at Saudi, which included a programme for persons with disability.

We'll move now to our experience in a scientific group at Kanghas Awoud University. Starting with our interest in scientific in 2009, we focused our research on evaluating and assessing the accessibility in Saudi websites, whether it's educational or service website, and we published those research to evaluate and measure the accessibility in different conferences. And we were keen to raise the awareness through publishing the scientific research in international magazines.

Also, we did use cases as sometimes persons with disability join the group in 2016 and 2017. One of the blind scholars studying at translation languages faculty joined us, and through our work with her, we discovered out she used a human assistant to search in different dictionaries. So we asked her if she would like to contribute and collaborate with us in research to develop accessible translation system for blind translators? And she gave us the requirements, and we discussed with her the user setup. And we took the needs and requests from her. And we have tried this system through the student, and it was proved with more and further development it will be of good aid for other students as well, and we have published this experience in ICCHP.

Also, at some point, we worked at A-1 Scientific Research. For the touch mobiles, we figured out and we found out it's hard for the elderly people to find the icons on the phone. So we did research to study the faces of mobile to provide easier usage. And we discovered there are lack in Arabic sites, and in 2017, we developed an Android facade to help elderly people and illiterate people as well to use mobile in an easy way through finding the icons and to use it originally. And for the daily use for elderly people. And this was published in Journal of Mobile Multimedia in 2017.

Also, I would like to mention an initiative we did four years ago, before COVID-19 one year, and I am very proud of this initiative because this initiative aims to teach programming for the blind people. So we did it through programming, and the computer technology, and this initiative was supported by STC and the Blind Association in Riyadh as well as Blind Computer Society. We announced this initiative, and the number of registrations was 50 requests, and I mean female because we were targeted females. From all Saudi Arabia. We received 50 registration requests. And because of the -- some restrictions due to geographic location, we chose some attendees, their average age was 27, and their education level was different, bachelor, high school, and diploma, and their specialty well also different, Arabic language, English language. And for example, at Saudi University, the blind and humanitarian measure.

The term of the programme was three weeks. Also I would like to mention the scientific technology for this programme. I would start from simple approaches and concepts of programming. We have discussed algorithm and how to solve it, as well as programming variables and the calculations, and through the pictures, you can see the rich content this programme has provided, like the table calculating, and we use different approaches. In one picture, this picture is showing the programming lines and the order of those lines and how to insert the orders. So the rich content for the blind students was very varied and rich. And if anyone would like to know more information, the scientific is published at Sustainability in 2020 through the vital appeared on the screen.

Finally, I would like to speak for an experience for master students to measure the application, delivery applications, for the persons with disability with a sight disability and to provide recommendations in this regard. The experiences started with two stages. The preliminary stage we did a questionnaire for persons with disabilities to ask them about the most programmes they are using. And their usage pattern. And the most used one was taxis, and also the electronic trade applications. And then we interviewed a number of the disabilities on how they use those applications. And when we understood how they use it, we started with the distinct stage which started with pilot test. And then we designed two applications and ten of persons with disability experienced and tested. We divided them into two groups. And then we analyzed their -- our usage, and we came out with the problems they experience. And finally, we did 12 recommendations to improve the delivery applications in Arabic language for blind people. That's all. Thank you for your listening.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Thank you. Thank you so much, Dr. Hend. Actually, remarkable scientific research, and it's not locally, but I can see it was shared on the Arab and international level to be used and beneficial for all so we can work all to develop it further. Thank you.

So from KSA, we move to Kuwait, and I would like to host

another expert in the ICT accessibility. We would like to welcome Dr. Zainab AlMeraj. Welcome, Zainab.

Dr. Zainab is a member at Information Technology at Life Sciences at Kuwait University. She works as national advocate at the UNAID, and she works at the international cooperative in Kuwait and is an expert in the educational translation institute at Mada. Dr. Zainab works on awareness and adopting best practices for ICT accessibility and usability through different sectors. And she documents the development in regards with the digital community in scientific research. Dr. Zainab uses her experience to publish more awareness and spread more awareness about the accessibility. And to measure persons with disabilities in different authorities and organizations, governmental and non-governmental. Dr. Zainab worked in UN, and she was responsible to facilitate the signature of a memorandum between Kuwait and UN. Dr. Zainab dedicated her career to develop the empowering of youth to implement the human rights. And I am very pleased to host you in this session. Dr. Zainab will talk with us about digital accessibility and usability efforts at Kuwait University. Dr. Zainab, welcome, and the floor is yours.

>> ZAINAB ALMERAJ: Thank you, Doctor, for the introduction, and it's my pleasure to be in this group of experts and specialists, and I am very pleased to hear and know those experiences.

Today I would like to speak about the digital accessibility and usability at Kuwait University. Kuwait University is the first scientific governmental university established in 1966 and aims to provide distinguished learning to contribute on providing knowledge and developing it and to spread it and as well as to qualify the human resources to achieve the development goals and community needs. And it provided a lot of contributions in terms of scientific research.

I am very proud to talk about the capabilities and expertise at Kuwait University by the assistance of managers and technicians, and we have introduced the importance of accessibility in technological domain, and now we are working in developers the vision to be accessible to all users at Kuwait University, especially persons with disabilities, and to building capacities. So I will talk about three points, the suggestions in the technician field, and then the association of education.

Firstly, for the technician aspect, to develop ICT accessible technology and to provide projects to integrate all the community, like the websites and the ICT system that is used at the University. And we work to spread awareness from the technicians and the administrative staff that there are programmes of accessible ICT for whoever needs it at the University.

One of the main things we have done this year was to develop a plan for digital accessibility lab for supporting the persons with disabilities, including administrative staff at the University, that we felt we needed. And this will be applied in the upcoming period. We held meetings with different Gulf universities in terms of persons with disability field, and we are very proud of such. We have

developed a simplified plan that includes tools and programmes to support students and staff in developing education.

Now we started to develop a training plan to develop competencies and expertise in the assistive technology field that is applicable at any Gulf university. Because the interest of persons and people are increasing. And to reach inclusive community, integrate everyone, so include and to connect all of their community through one platform.

Another aspect we are talking about technically to have a central administration in digital accessibility to support specialist services to provide community services to provide all services to different levels of community.

The administration came through research that was done in different administrations at Washington, Oxford, and others, and how they measure this administration with the technician aspect. And then as an organization. And in the upcoming period, we will increase our expertise and get introduced to others and support each other in this field.

Amongst other achievements we did in the technician field, when we launched the website and the applications we have, we asked some students from an association to try and address the problems and issues they are facing in the applications and if they can access the curriculums and the content. And through all of the channels, technician channels that are supported at the University.

For education, we studied and reviewed all the problems that are related to the Deaf translators at the University, and we tried to provide them with solutions to test the digital accessibility. And if anyone would like to know more information, they can get in touch with us.

We looked into what happens at the university is different from what we experience in the university, and we tried to integrate between both systems to provide the best services to the deaf. And we tried to implement the inclusive system at education. And we thought about the ideas from the beginning, whether it's in the university or from outside. We wanted to communicate with others, as Dr. Dena has mentioned that at Mada Center, that they are forming a training material and content and would like to collaborate on it as well to increase the competencies and capacities in this field, especially in the education.

The scientific publications were many, only because we wanted to know more information about this field. So we discovered technologies in breast cancer and the persons with disabilities, so through COVID and what happened through COVID, and it was very important to reach knowledge at what society needs and how to provide the technologies and services to provide them with what they needed.

We have finished two of them, and we are still working on other two projects. And in the near future, we would share with you all of the projects. Thank you for your time, and I would like to answer any questions, if any.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Zainab,

very much. I would like to join you to enroll the initiatives that talks ICT accessibility, our universities, and our universities, and this would be the first thing to achieve in the Arab region. I look forward to it. And I would like to assure that all the speakers, they are members at ICT Accessibility, and this initiative from Mada. Thank you so much, Doctor. Then from Arab Republic of Egypt, hello, Dr. Ghada.

>> GHADA EL KHAYAT: I can share screen?

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Dr. Ghada, I would like to thank her for accepting the invitation. She is very energetic. She is in Paris. And she insisted to join us in this session, ICT Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities, so thank you, Dr. Ghada. She is Head of Information Technology Department at Faculty of Commerce at Alexandria University. She worked on a number of major projects, including to implement and to test new projects. And she supervised more than 50 projects at Faculty of Engineering and more than 20 projects at master and PhD. And she published many scientific research as well as published books internationally. And she is the director educational centre at Alexandria. Dr. Ghada, the floor is yours.

>> GHADA EL KHAYAT: I am very delighted to be here today, that I wouldn't see without your esteemed invitation.

I will try to speak Arabic. But in Egypt, we are talking the Egyptian Arabic, but I will make my effort to talk in standard Arabic.

I would like to share with you today some initiatives from Alexandria University at ICT accessibility, and I thought how to share these initiatives due to my varied and wide personal experience. And the experience of the university to, with the support of ICT activities, I thought to share with you some enlightening activities and structural activities at the University, what are the new administration, and educationally, what we are doing at Alexandria University, especially as my academic activity at the ICT, and finally, some activities that we do at the University.

In terms of research, I would like to talk more with you in the structure initiatives. There are some individual initiatives, but you give me a lot of encouragement to work on having scientific school at the Alexandria University.

On an enlightening level, the University has a number of conferences and workshops. One of them was ICT in Our Lives, Digital Inclusion, where experts from all over the world discussed digital inclusion and the accessibility from persons with disabilities and other marginalized categories, like the limited communities, ladies who don't have access to ICT. So that was the first measure initiative on this level.

On the structural level, the University established a private centre to support persons with disabilities, which was established with the state of the art techniques that were designed especially to improve the accessibility of this category to technology. Also, the university established these services, but

for the scientific aspect is not activated yet, and some of the departments are working on it right now. So in this PowerPoint, I would include more inclusive and general idea of accessibility that University established a unit to support women against domestic violence, and that she can use the technology and to access this technology for this category. And this is very important tool that enables this category of women to achieve financial independence. And we realize it's very important in terms of technology accessibility.

On the educational level, we held a number of trainings to the staff and students to technology accessibility, and the goal was that all the staff academy should follow all the students through this content, and this was very popular in the university. But as if we have create add new concept among the Academy staff and university staff that need this service, but they didn't take into consideration from the university.

Also, from the general concept of accessibility, we consider that not very fortunate financial categories couldn't access good quality education, and not all of the universities were equipped with such platforms. But the resources and the available resources were available on the platforms, and the students could look into these platforms, and we have launched OER wiki at Mena to access the content for those categories who are unfortunate. For the activities level, there are very important projects through Alexandria University, which launched an occupational for projects called pilot, which is application and innovation for learning objectives and teaching, and to incubate the projects that aim to develop the technologies for educational resources, and through these courses, Alexandria University provides a number of workshops for persons with disabilities for females.

And here is another example of accessibility. And as Dr. Mohamed Kouthair mentioned at the beginning, the focal point and one of those activities that I am talking in France today was open to sustain to provide open educational resources through digital platforms to support the women in different fields, and among them the digital field open to sustain projects use the resources focused on goal #5 and the human woman accessibility, as mentioned in goal #5, it's a long road, but we will reach to accessibility. Alexandria University contributed in the digital empowerment initiative for Egyptian women and to provide equality between men and women in digital inclusion. And to empower the females economically. And to provide the experience for the British Council Project for Digital Inclusion for dependent women in Egypt. And it takes mechanisms so women can work in the official economics through digital inclusion initiatives. And it's another form of accessibility. So this is on Alexandria University and different access, but I couldn't include everything in the PowerPoint, but I took from my colleagues' contributions at Alexandria University. We provide a PhD for human-computer interaction, and it wasn't designed for persons with disabilities, but it discussed it. And there was a number of

scientific research in this field and also postgraduate projects in the technician universities.

Also, on the national level, the National Academy for Disabilities at Ministry of Communication work in this field, and also there is financial inclusion projects. And I would like to thank you all and thank you, Dr. Mohamed, for the invitation. And I am very pleased to speak with you.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Thank you so much, Dr. Ghada. As was mentioned, we wish there is a course between all of the Arab countries in regards with ICT accessibility. And I hope it will be soon. And I thank you for spotlighting the open education resources and how we can employ these resources to publish more content and curriculum and training on the accessibility subject. Thank you so much.

So from the local, regional aspects to the international aspect and to host the expert, Dr. Mohammed Ali Loutfy, and I would like to apologize for the long waiting, but I am pretty sure he was enjoying the contributions. And now we will talk about the international aspect in this scene, in the ICT accessibility. And the other aspect is that all of the ladies finished their contributions, so in order to maintain the equality, ladies spoke first, and then you are the last contributor in this session. So most of the contributions were from female experts that we are honored to have. And the last contribution from Dr. Mohammed Loutfy, who is the Director of capacity building and advocacy. Dr. Loutfy is working as Associate Partner for persons with disability and to advocate at UN for persons with disabilities. This year he participated in establishment of the Council of Persons with Disability, and he coordinated the international campaign for persons with disabilities. And he published a number of scientific research in this field. Dr. Loutfy awarded PhD from technology and development from Washington University. And he was awarded PhD from the American University, and he is the professor of public law at Lebanese University. Thank you, you will talk to us about the disability rights education Academy. The floor is yours.

>> MOHAMMED LOUTFY: Thank you, Dr. Mohamed, and I am honored to be among these experts. And I would like to thank them for their valuable contributions and their initiatives in the Arab world, which is very remarkable. And we are proud to be here with you today.

This contribution is on behalf of the DARE Academy, Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs, G3ict. The initiative was launched in 2006, a number of persons and private institutions who are interested in empowering persons with disability for ICT accessibility, and among them the UN. And this initiative launched once it was verified to verify the agreement in regards with persons with disabilities from UN.

Numbers of programmes and initiatives have been made. One of them was a digital accessibility rights educational academy, which I will speak about, but also there are a number of programmes, which is the International Association for Accessibility Experts that

provides a wide range of certificates and competencies in the digital accessibility through text accessibility and website accessibility. And this organization included more than 4,000 members whom are concerned with accessibility issues as well as private organizations.

I would like to focus this contribution on the Digital Accessibility Rights Education Academy, which was launched last year during the conference in New York and its initiative in collaboration with a number of organizations that are concerned with persons with disabilities among the disabilities union and federal union for deaf.

This initiative was launched after we looked into the G3ict DARE Index, which Dr. Mohamed mentioned earlier, and we observed that the percentage and the level of ICT accessibility capacity building, whether from universities or private institutions, is very low. This Index included information from 137 countries and a very small number of countries that have ICT accessibility capacity building. In the Arab region, it's 38% from the number of countries that have these kind of programmes, and it varies according to the income level, so the countries with limited income is 22% of countries that have accessibility programmes. The countries with medium income level is 29%. Countries with high income level, 59%. We found there is a need to promote the culture of ICT accessibility, especially amongst persons with disabilities. We found most of those people have limited information and knowledge about the accessibility, like the automated reader for computer using the mobile. Although there are a number of other programmes in terms of ICT accessibility and digital accessibility.

So we launched this academy. This academy aims to -- the knowledge empowerment for persons with disabilities and to exchange the experience amongst them in the field of digital accessibility policies.

The second objective is to provide scholarships to get the competency certificate in the accessibility and digital accessibility for persons with disabilities. That scholarship programme is limited right now to the general competency certificate in accessibility, which is provided by G3ict through collaboration with the American University.

The third objective we have is to support the leading initiative in the accessibility, leading by persons with disabilities, especially in third-world countries.

Now we will talk about programmes. The Academy has three programmes. The first was launched last year, which is the scholarship programme, and those scholarships were dedicated for persons with disabilities only, and especially for the digital accessibility field. The priority is for the persons with disabilities in this field, not the employees in the private sector, but only for the advocates in this field. The priority is given to persons with disabilities coming from third-world countries, countries with low or medium income.

These initiatives were provided in the first phase and

second phase of mid of last year. The first phase was launched from July to September, and the second one was from October to December. And the number of students granted this scholarship was 40. And unfortunately, there are limited number from Arab countries. Only one person from the Arab country got it from Sudan.

This scholarship empowers the person to submit for the competency certificate in accessibility, and the scholarship expires in one year, so the person who gets it should be prepared for the examination in one year and to obtain the certificate not more than a year.

We hope to launch the third scholarships in July, and we would provide you with the information of the terms and conditions of this scholarship and how you can apply for it.

The second programme is studying programme that focuses on submitting the successful experience in the digital accessibility field, and it's according to G3ict index. Since 2020, we were working on updating the information and the quantitative data on the successful experience in the digital accessibility to be ready, used as studying content in the programme, and this programme will be virtually, and we hope it will be launched by the end of this year. And this programme is available for everyone who is concerned with digital accessibility. So to register in this programme, there is limited fees to be paid that will be announced later on.

And from other resources that programme is depending on is the training that is provided by G3ict that is developing right now in terms of digital policies that was outlined through contributions, International Telecommunication Union.

The last programme, which is the Global Initiative on Inclusive ICTs, a network we aim to gather all the persons with disabilities that have advocate role in this regard to exchange expertise and to support their initiative locally and regionally on the government and decision-makers to put policies and standards in terms of the ICT.

Next, please.

And in order to contact G3ict and Digital Accessibility Rights Evaluation Academy, you can communicate with me personally or go to the website on the slide. I would like to collaborate with you. Right now we are working on translating the competency certificate in accessibility in Arabic language. And the accessibility test was translated also to Arabic language and will be launched soon, in addition to launch the main website of the accessibility experts in Arabic language soon. Thank you.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Thank you, Dr. Mohammed Loutfy. Actually, a very rich initiative, as always from Digital Accessibility Rights Evaluation Academy, and also the idea of localizing these initiatives to Arabic. It will be very beneficial, especially in the Arabic countries. And we look to collaborate with you to develop the ICT accessibility in the region. Thank you so much. Actually, we have passed the time, but I couldn't interrupt these remarkable presentations and interesting presentations that

I hope all of our audience have benefitted from it.

I know only 20 seconds for each speaker for closing remarks. We will start with Dr. Mohammed Loutfy, a closing remark, please.

There will not be questions and answers, so we would like to have closing remarks.

>> MOHAMMED LOUTFY: One more time, I would like to thank Mada Center. We in and Mada have partnership for years, and we are ambitious to activate and to interact with all the speakers in this session to activate the digital accessibility for persons with disabilities in the Arab world, and that's what we aim at G3ict, to have the accessibility for persons with disabilities on our top priority in the Arab countries. Thank you, Doctor.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Dr. Ghada?

>> GHADA EL KHAYAT: Dr. Mohamed, I would like to thank you so much for this invitation, and I was very pleased to be with these experts. And I thank all of them, and I would like to ask to stay in touch, to have future projects, and to invite you as well in upcoming events. And I would like very much to participate in all of your events to see the updates that you are working on. Thank you very much.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Dr. Zainab?

>> ZAINAB ALMERAJ: Thank you very much. I was honored to be among you. Thank you, Dr. Mohamed, for the invitation. And the empowerment for persons with disabilities, it's a very important issue. It's important to professionally and personally, and it's interesting for all the entities, and hope to see you again.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Dr. Hend?

>> HEND AL-KHALIFA: Thank you to Mada Center for organizing this event in the ICT sector, and thank all the colleagues and experts I have today and hope to have more sessions in the future in this field.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Thank you. Dr. Dena?

>> DENA AL-THANI: I am very proud to be with experts, and I would like to thank you, Dr. Mohamed, and also thank Mada for the invitation. The session reflected today the importance of universities in developing the community, not only in scientific research, but in developing communities and establishing partnerships. So this is my closing remarks. And of course, we will be in touch.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Thank you. Ms. Al Jazi?

>> AL JAZI AL-JABOR: Thank you, Doctor. For me, I was very pleased to have update on the latest scientific research, and I would like to thank all the experts for sharing their experience on these projects and to have further sessions.

>> MOHAMED KOUTHEAIR KHRIBI: Thank you, Al Jazi, and we have reached the end of this session. We hope all of the participants and followers benefitted and got knowledge from the presentations from the speakers and participants. Me, personally, it was very beneficial, and I got to know many information and research in the

Arab region and all over the world. I hope to stay in touch. It's not the end of the session, but it's the beginning of fruitful cooperation between all the Arab countries to achieve the goal to empower persons with disabilities to live independently and to contribute in all life sectors.

Thank you one more time, and we hope to see you in other sessions. And I would like to invite you to join us on the Wednesday, on May 25, it will be a session organized by Mada about the innovation and sustainable development. See you later. And good-bye.

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