HEMAYA - Protecting women and girls with disabilities from violence in Palestine

RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS
The Social and Economic Policies Monitor (Al-Marsad); Stars of Hope Society (SHS)

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CONTEXT
Discrimination towards people with disabilities, coupled with attitudes towards women in patriarchal societies such as Palestine, place women and girls with disabilities (WGWDs) at increased risk of violence. Indeed, violence against women and girls with disabilities is related to both gender and disability-based discrimination and exclusion. Although WGWDs experience many of the same forms of violence that women not living with disability experience, they suffer unique consequences resulting from the intersection between gender discrimination and disability. Violence against WGWDs has unique forms and causes, and results in unique consequences that are magnified by social exclusion, limited mobility, lack of support structures, communication barriers, negative social perceptions, and dependence. WGWDs tend to have lower educational, financial, professional, and social success than both non-disabled females and their disabled male counterparts. To make matters worse, WGWDs in Palestine are still excluded from the anti-violence efforts including prevention programs, support services, and access to justice.

The project builds on the HEMAYA Project - Protecting Women and Girls with Disabilities from Violence in Palestine – that mapped needs of WGWDs in Palestine and through research will identify needs and solutions to address two key challenges the elimination of violence against women and violence against girls (EVAW/G) with disabilities environment faces in Palestine, namely safe houses and the national referral system, with the aim of providing policy recommendations and advocating for reforms to ensure provision of services responsive to the needs of WGWDs.

PROJECT AIM
The study will continue to focus on breaking the vicious cycle of “Invisibility” of WGWDs to the duty-bearers and the “silence” of rights-holders (WGWDs). Rooted in the principle of “not-segregate but integrate”, the study works towards integrating WGWDs’ priorities and including their needs in the collective EVAW/G sphere, strategies and practices in Palestine, through but not limited to: raising awareness of duty bearers and decision makers of the gendered-disability violence issues and concepts; enriching the literature around violence against women and girls with disabilities by producing and disseminating different research, policy, and position papers; influencing policy makers and government officials, women organizations, civil society organizations and disabled person’s organisations to consider gendered-disability violence issues as a priority. The project will tackle the root causes of the problem through adopting a unique principle of integration and comprehensiveness, where all relevant stakeholders will be targeted by or involved in the project implementation under the leadership of WGWDs, who will lead the bottom-up change during and beyond the lifetime of the project. WGWDs will be extensively involved in implementing the project’s interventions and activities.

STUDY CONTRIBUTION
The research results will be used to advocate for evidence-based policies and programmes to reform and expand the national referral system and safe houses to ensure safe access of WGWDs to adequate and appropriate support services. The research findings will also contribute to the global evidence on VAW/G with disabilities, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.