In May 2000, the Lebanese Parliament approved a new legislation, Law No. 220, which secures the basic rights for the disabled. According to the Law disabled people have right to employment. The employment opportunities are enhanced by mentioning obligation for hiring disabled people Art. 73 and 74 define the quota of disabled people that should be employed by public and private sector. Public sector shall appoint at least 3 per cent of the global number of positions in the different categories to disabled persons. As for the private sector, the enterprises that have an employee capacity among 30 to 60 are obliged to employ one disabled person if he/she qualifies and meets the working conditions should employ one disabled person. If the capacity of a private sector company surpasses 60 employees the number of disabled should be at least the 3 per cent of the total number of workers.

A penalty is also set in the article for companies that do not employ disabled persons. The penalty amount has to be paid to the Ministry of Labor and will be four times the minimum basic salary for every unemployed disabled person. The employer is exempted of the penalty if he provides the Ministry of Social Affairs with documents certifying that the employers presented a request to the Ministry of Labor to hire a disabled person, but no qualified person was available three months from the date of submission of the request.

In case the private sector employs more disabled persons it will benefit from a reduction on the income tax calculated at the minimum basic salary on every additional disabled employee declared by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Therefore, Law No. 220 recognizes to unemployed disabled people meeting certain conditions, an ‘Unemployment Social Security’ allocation, calculated as 75 per cent of the minimum salary range.

Law No. 220 recognizes also the right of disabled children to education. This right is set out also by the education (No. 686, 1998) and in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). According to the CRC, education should help disabled children achieve social integration. Although disabled children have specifically protected rights to education, international studies show that disabled people have less education and fewer qualifications than the general population.

According to the Central Administration of Statistics (CAS), there are approximately 60,000 disabled persons in Lebanon, yielding a disability rate of 1.5%(*). Until very recently disability was the forgotten dimension of human rights and unacknowledged as subject for the right of equality. Society is unaware of the potential valuable contribution people with disabilities can make in the workforce.