



MERCY HANDS

FOR HUMANITARIAN AID

جمعية ايادي الرحمة الانسانية

**RAPID ASSESSMENT:
UNDERSTANDING THE FUNDING CHALLENGES, EDUCATION
NEEDS AND ASPIRATIONS OF INSTITUTES FOR CHILDREN
WITH DISABILITIES IN BASRA.**



**DoLSA /Department
of Special Needs
Care**



**Al-Amal Institute for
deaf children**



**Al-Noor Institute for
blind children**



**Al-Raja Institute for
children with
mental disabilities**

IRAQ, BASRA

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Abstract

The following Rapid Assessment was conducted in November 2022 in Basra city, Basra Governorate, South of Iraq, involving the three institute for children with disability present in the city, as well the Department of Special Needs of the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs for better understanding the financial capacities and needs of such institutes, as well as their education needs, present challenges, areas where support would be needed and future aspirations.

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Disclaimer

The assessment was conducted in November 2022, and the ideas, opinions and findings are related to the context and time when the survey was administrated and do not necessarily reflect the present time opinions of DOLSA, DOE, the school managers of the three institutes, as well as of Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid.

Mercy Hands would like to sincerely thank Basra's Special Needs Department of the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs, as well as the Managers of the Al-Raja Institute for the deaf children, Al -Amel institute for children with mental issues (Arabic), and Al Noor Insitute for blind children, for their kind cooperation, remarkable and admirable work, and willingness to improve education for children with disability in Basra.

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List of acronyms and abbreviations

CWD: Children with Disability

DOE: Directorate of Education

DOLSA: Department of Labour and Social Affairs

INGO: International Non-Governmental Organization

MH: Mercy Hands for Humanitarian Aid

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

SOP: Standard Operation Procedure

UN: United Nations

Key Findings

The followed Rapid Assessment highlighted that institutes for CwD in Basra are public schools providing mainly kindergarten and primary education, with limited funding resources that often cover only the basic needs of the schools such as salaries and basic equipment and are not allowed to conduct fundraising activities. Moreover, the challenges of each institute are different based on the needs of their students, but share the common need for receiving direct support rather than economic one, consisting in tailored curriculum for each type of disability, updated teacher trainings for dealing with the different kinds of disabilities, and specialized equipment (however not always available in Iraq) for both improving the accessibility of the schools' environments as well as for ensuring a higher quality of education. Furthermore, no development organizations are currently supporting the institutes, despite the high number of students and being the only institutes for CwD in Basra, highlighting the need for further interventions for ensuring the right to education for every child.

Introduction

In November 2022 Mercy Hands has conducted a Rapid Assessment in Basra city, Basra Governorate, South of Iraq, in order to assess the financial capacity, as well as the education needs and challenges of the three institutes for children with disabilities (CwD) present in the city. The Rapid Assessment involved, the Al-Amel institute for the deaf children (معهد الامل للصم) (واليكم), the Al-Raja Institute for children with mental issues (معهد الرجاء للتخلف العقلي), and the Al Noor for blind children (معهد النور للمكفوفين), and the Special Needs Department of the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs (مديرية العمل والشؤون الاجتماعية قسم رعاية ذوي الاحتياجات الخاصة).

In Basra, as well as in the rest of Iraq, children with disabilities face several challenges in accessing public education and completing both primary, intermediate and then transitioning to secondary education, due to lack of correct diagnosis, poverty, lack of specialized teachers/educators in schools, stigma present within communities (that is also coupled with gender biased norms in case of girls with disabilities). Moreover, even when families are willing and have the means to send their CwD to school, often they are not integrated into public schools among other students, and only very few specialized institutes for CwD are present in the country.

Furthermore, there is a lack of clear data about the presence of CwD in primary, intermediate and higher education in Iraq, as well as little information about the financial capacity of the institutes for CwD, education needs and aspirations.

Methodology

The Rapid assessment was conducted in Basra city, Basra Governorate, South of Iraq, in November 2022 by Mercy Hands Education Director and Mercy Hands Project Manager Marwa Yahya Hassan. A total of 12 questions (please refer to the below) developed by the three authors, were administrated in Arabic language through in-person modality, to the three School Managers of the Al-Amel Institute for the deaf children, the Al-Raja institute for children with mental issues, and the Al Noor Institute for blind children, as well as to the Director of the Special Needs Department of the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs (DOLSA) in Basra.

The answers of the questions have been translated from Arabic to English during the data collection in the field, in order to retain the highest accuracy and volume of information possible, and then analysed in English language.

The following approach aimed to comprehensively assess the financial capacity, education needs and challenges of the institutes for CwD in Basra, from the point of view of both DOLSA' Department responsible for the institutes, as well as from the school managers, who were directly involved in the day-to-day work for CwD.

The questions administrated:

1. Is this school (for CwD) a governmental schools, semi-governmental, or private? Do you have Board of Directors? Who assigns the management? etc. Do they have written policies and SOPs? Do they have administrative departments? What is it composed of?

هل هذه المدرسة حكومية أم شبه حكومية أم خاصة؟ هل لديكم مجلس إدارة؟ من المكلف بالإدارة؟ إلخ. هل لديكم سياسات مكتوبة وإجراءات تشغيل موحدة؟ هل لديكم أقسام إدارية؟ مما تتكون؟

2. What about the funding from the local government (the governor's office, a committee that reports to the governor, etc) vs. federal government (DoLSA. DoE, etc.)

ماذا عن التمويل من الحكومة المحلية (مكتب المحافظ، لجنة تقدم تقاريرها إلى المحافظ، إلخ) بالمقابل الحكومة الفيدرالية (مديرية التربية، مديرية العمل والشؤون الاجتماعية وغيرها).

3. Are the funds you receive sufficient for the schools? Are they allowed to do fundraising? If they are then what kind of fundraising activities do they do? How much of their funding comes from fundraising? Do they have proper training in fundraising? A strategy or plan? Etc

هل الأموال التي تتلقاها كافية للمدارس؟ هل يسمح لكم بالقيام بجمع التبرعات؟ إذا كان يسمح لكم بذلك إداً ما نوع أنشطة جمع الأموال التي تقومون بها؟ كم من تمويلكم يأتي من جمع التبرعات؟ هل لديهم تدريب مناسب على جمع التبرعات؟ استراتيجية أم خطة؟ إلخ

4. Which are the needs and issues of school (for the students)?

ما هي احتياجات ومشاكل المدرسة (للطلاب)؟

5. Which are the needs and issues of the school (for the teachers and other staff)?

ما هي احتياجات ومشاكل المدرسة (للمعلمين والموظفين الآخرين)؟

6. What support you would need for solving these issues? (of students and teachers)

ما هو الدعم الذي ستحتاجه لحل هذه المشكلات؟ (من الطلاب والمعلمين)؟

7. Is there a management structure in the school for managing the funds? Please describe

هل يوجد هيكل إداري في المدرسة لإدارة الأموال؟ يرجى الوصف.

8. How is the school managed? Do parents and teachers participate in decision making?

كيف تدار المدرسة؟ هل يشارك الآباء والمدرسون في صنع القرار؟

9. Do other NGOs support you? If no, why? If yes how?

هل تدعمك المنظمات غير الحكومية الاخرى؟ إذا كانت الإجابة لا ، فلماذا؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، فكيف؟

10. Have INGOs ever supported you? If no, why? If yes, why?

هل سبق وان دعمتك المنظمات غير الحكومية الدولية؟ إذا كانت الإجابة لا، فلماذا؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، فلماذا؟

11. As any United Nations (UN) Agency supported you? If yes how? If no, why

أي وكالة من وكالات الأمم المتحدة دعمتك؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم، فكيف؟ إذا كان الجواب لا، فلماذا.

12. Would you like to expand /further develop the work of your school? If yes in which way?

هل ترغب في توسيع / تطوير عمل مدرستك؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم بأي طريقة؟

The Rapid Assessment: findings

Department of Special Needs of the Directorate of Labour and Social Affairs

- 1- **Institutes' management structure.** All the three institutes for CwD are public schools and DOLSA is responsible for them.

Regarding the Standard operating procedures (SOPs), no specific SOPs or policies have been developed for the 3 institutes. In terms of the management running the institutes, it was indicated that in previous years personnel was selected through a test, which however is not anymore administrated. In terms of administration of the 3 institutes DOLSA's administrative department is responsible for the general administration of the 3 institutes.

- 2- **Funding.** The Ministry of Finance is responsible for financing DOLSA's Special Needs Department, and the money is then channelled into: one part for the three institutes, and one other part for the salaries of DOLSA 's staff. It was shared that the staff's salaries depend on the years of service, as well as on their education level, and vary from 500 USD up to 1000 for more senior or higher positions. Moreover, during the recent pandemic, less resources were received.

- 3- **Funding and needs.** It was shared that the money is not enough for the equipment for CwD needed in the 3 institutes, and often is enough just to cover the teacher's and staff's salaries. Moreover fundraising is not possible, as the institutes are not allowed to collect money through fundraising. However, some people from the community in Basra and from local charity organizations donate small amounts of money or equipment/school materials directly to the institutes. It was also shared that however the biggest need of the institutes is not money per se, but rather specialized and specific school equipment, materials and devices for CwD.
- 4- **Needs of the institutes.** It was shared that some of the biggest challenges include: the need for updating the school staff on new inclusive teaching methodologies; new plans for integrating CwD in public schools as previous efforts were not completely successful, and was only limited to primary education; lack of adequate school furniture and materials such as chairs desks and specialized equipment for CwD (in particular for blind and deaf children) is missing and not present in Iraq, coupled with the lack of permission for DOLSA and the institutes to buy specialized education/school equipment from outside Iraq; lack of adequate diagnosis of the kind and severity of children's disability, and often children with even just partial eye and hearing issues, are pushed to join institutes for blind students or deaf students, while they could easily join public schools completing regular school years and curricula without major challenges; lack of understanding of autism and how to tailor education curricula and activities for such children; lack of adequate and tailored support for CwD for successfully transitioning to intermediate and higher education due to lack of specialized teachers and equipment (however, it was shared that since 2020 it is possible for blind and deaf students, to access intermediate public schools, and complete the national exam, but adequate support is still missing for these CwD in the transition);
- 5- **Needs of teachers.** When it comes to the needs of the teachers it was shared that there is a significant need for specific teacher trainings (particularly for new teachers joining the institutes) on inclusive education and disability, including specific ones for understanding how to interact and teach to children with different kinds of disabilities, and developing tailored educational plans
- 6- **Support needed for solving the institutes' issues.** It was shared that the major support for tackling the issues present in the institutes would be to ensure updated and regular trainings for teachers staff, more specialized equipment for the institutes rather than simply an increase of money, as this is often not sold in Iraq.
- 7- **Institutes management structure for managing the funds.** It was shared that the institutes have an internal management structure for managing their material and assets (such as school equipment and tools) and human resources, resources, but there is not management structure for funds, as institutes are not allowed to conduct fundraising and all funds are managed by DOLSA's departments.
- 8- **How the school is managed and parents participating in decision making processes.** It was shared that the three institutes are managed just like other public schools by the school managers, and the parents of students have the possibility to

join the bi-annual meetings in the first and second semester with the school manager and teachers, where they have the opportunity to ask questions and clarifications on any matter related to the institute and education provided, as well as to propose ideas and suggestions. Furthermore, if urgent matters or issues arise in the school, parents have the possibility to request a meeting the school manager and teachers.

- 9- **NGOs support.** It was shared that no Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO), had previously supported the institutes for CwD, except for Mercy Hands who has implemented the “Expanding the empowerment of girls and women through IT and Coding education in Shat Al-Arab” project in partnership with the Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives and the “Empowering girls and youth through IT education and environmental awareness” in partnership with Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation.
- 10- **INGOs.** It was shared that no International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) previously supported continuously the institutes for CwD. However the British Council provided support for deaf students at intermediate school and a Jordanian NGO “Holy Lands” conducted a staff training.
- 11- **UN support.** It was shared that no UN support was previously received the institutes for CwD.
- 12- **Expanding/further developing the work of the institutes.** It was shared that the best support that would allow to further develop the work of the school and positively impact CwD’s education would be the teachers’ trainings on disability and specialized equipment not available in Iraq.

Al-Noor Institute for blind children

- 1- **Institutes’ management structure.** The Al Noor Institute for blind students is a public institute, providing primary education, under the department of Special Needs of DOLSA. It is run through a general management structure. In terms of policies it follows DoE’s policies when it comes to education (both in terms the curricula taught to students) and DOLSA’s policies when it comes to the management of staff. The institute also has a website, which however has not been fully developed due to lack of resources. The school management includes the Institute’s Manager, the Manager Assistant, the social researchers, and teachers.
- 2- **Funding.** Regarding the funding the institutes depends on the resources channelled by DOLSA, and the institute does not manage any fund and consequently has not got any management for so.
- 3- **Funding and needs.** Regarding the fundraising, the Institute is not allowed to conduct fundraising according to the Iraqi law, however some people from the nearby community (such as doctors) and some local charity organizations, have spontaneously donated some resources to the institute in the past, for supporting

students most in need, as the institute encourages such people willing to help the school to directly contact the families of the children most in need. Most of the donations for the institute were for: covering the transportation fees of students living outside the center of Basra and coming from poor families, the graduation ceremonies and parties, the security cameras. Furthermore the funding received is often not sufficient for covering the specific needs of blind students, particularly for purchasing specific technical equipment, and it was shared that receiving such kind of support would be even more useful than just receiving economic support.

- 4- **Needs of the institutes.** It was shared that the major needs of the institute regard: the lack of specific equipment for supporting blind students in accessing the school environment (such as walking sticks, microphones and speakers system for regulating the lessons' duration, schedules and activities); lack of technical equipment for sport classes, such as balls with rings; lack of computer laboratories with laptops for blind students; which however often is not available in Iraq); books and computers for blind students; teachers' trainings on inclusive education and education for blind students; lack of transportation support for children living in remote areas and from poor families who can't afford transportation costs; bigger school building which would allow to conduct more laboratories and activities; students' perception to be separated from the rest of the community; lack of resources for maintaining and fixing the security cameras; lack of students' confidence and challenges in learning Braille language; lack of disability inclusive signs in their community including to the way to school.
- 5- **Needs of teachers.** It was shared that the biggest needs for teachers include to be updated on new teaching approaches and methodologies for blind students, both through online trainings as well as by workshops organized by specialists able to train teachers according to international standards.
- 6- **Support needed for solving the institutes' issues.** In order to tackle the institute's major issues it was shared that specialized trainings for teachers on education for blind students held by professionals meeting international standards, would represent a huge support, as well as the provision of technical equipment for blind students, which however is often not available in Iraq.
- 7- **Institutes management structure for managing the funds.** Regarding the funding it was shared that the institute does not manage any funds since all resources are received from DOLSA, and therefore the institute does not have any management structures for funds. However, whenever community members of parents are willing to support even economically the institute, the Manager prefers to link them to the families of the children most in need, in order to ensure direct support for those most in need, and allowing the donors to spontaneously choose which amount and for what they can donate.
- 8- **How the school is managed and parents participating in decision making processes.** The institute is managed just like other public schools in Iraq and parents have the possibility to join the bi-annual meetings in the first and second semesters, where they can have the opportunity to discuss problems (for example the school's

maintenance). It was also shared that the main difference between the institute and other public schools was the unique care provided by teachers to the students and the special attention dedicated in supporting their daily life aspects while being at school (for example teachers support also the students most in need in using the water hygiene and sanitation facilities).

- 9- **NGOs support.** It was shared that some local organizations had previously donated some games for the students, however no structured support has ever been provided by NGOs to the institute.
- 10- **INGOs.** It was shared that no INGOs recently supported the institute, however in the past some INGO provided building and maintenance support.
- 11- **UN support.** UNICEF previously supported the institute donating 25 tablets to the institute, as well as 3 caravan classes (which are now used as additional classrooms)
- 12- **Expanding/further developing the work of the institutes.** The Manager expressed a high interest and motivation in upgrading and improving both the quality of teaching as well as the services provided by the institute, and underlined that the best support for achieving this would be not through direct economic support, but rather by trainings and workshops for teachers, as well as through the provision of technical equipment for improving blind children's education, which is not possible to purchase due to the lack of funds and/or unavailability of equipment in Iraq.

Al-Amel institute for deaf children

- 1- **Institutes' management structure.** The institute is a public school, providing Kindergarten, Primary and intermediate education (first and second classes only) under the Department of Special Needs of DOLSA. The institute's core management staff is made of the Manager and the Assistant. The institute follows the policies of the DoE for the school curricula and classes taught, and follows DOLSA's policies when it comes to the management and human resources of the school.
- 2- **Funding.** It was shared that the funding comes form the Ministry of Finance, which directly provides the teachers' salaries, while additional resources for schools for CwD are ALSO sent to DOLSA in Basra who then channels resources to the institute depending on the availability of funds, such as equipment and materials.
- 3- **Funding and needs.** It was shared that the institute was fine with the amount of economic resources provided them, however would need more technical equipment for supporting the classes and activities. Moreover, the institute can't conduct any fundraising according to the Iraqi law. Furthermore, the institute is the largest institute for deaf students in Iraq, with 200 students registered. It was also shared that additional economic resources would be useful for the maintenance of school infrastructure (such as air conditioning), however trainings for teachers and provision of specialized equipment would highly benefit the school's teachers and students.

- 4- **Needs of the institutes.** The major need of the institute is related to the transportation of the students coming from outside of Basra as often the parents can't afford transportation fees. In order to overcome this the institute provided 3 free buses, however also new families are in need of further support.
- 5- **Needs of teachers.** It was shared that the major challenges and needs of teachers include updated trainings on sign and body language for better communicating with students, which would also be very important for the other school's staff.
- 6- **Support needed for solving the institutes' issues.** It was shared that specialized trainings on body language and sign language for teaching to deaf students would highly benefit the teachers' teaching as well as overall quality of education, as well as the school's staff, and which would be even more useful than economic support.
- 7- **Institutes management structure for managing the funds.** The institute has no management structure for managing the funds has no economic resource is directly received by the institute. However, the institute has an internal committee for managing the computers present in the school.
- 8- **How the school is managed and parents participating in decision making processes.** It was shared that the institute is managed in a similar way to other public schools. Moreover, in the institute there are parents and teachers groups present in each class, allowing the parents of students to be informed about the school activities. Furthermore, the parents also participate in the bi-annual meetings in the first and second semester, where topics such as students' behaviour or other school's issues are discussed. (The problems related to students' behaviour are often related to the fact that since the students' can't express themselves through language they express themselves with body and physical language).
- 9- **NGOs support.** It was shared that before 2003 NGOs supported the institute, however, after that year support decreased and stopped.
- 10- **INGOs.** It was shared that no INGOs supported the institute.
- 11- **UN support.** UNICEF provided the institute with 3 caravan classes in the past year, however the students refused often to hold classes in them: deaf students are more sensitive to external factors and perceive the "empty space" in the caravan's floor as dangerous and not stable surface. However, the school decided to develop a library and storage space for data show and equipment inside the caravans.
- 12- **Expanding/further developing the work of the institutes.** It was shared that the institute is working hard to allow all students to transition to intermediate and secondary education, completing the national exams, and the institute dreams of seeing their students complete university one day. Furthermore, laboratories and computer classes would allow students to develop more skills and expand their education. Also,

additional support for sport classes (in terms of areas and equipment) would allow to have more inclusive sessions, as often the boys play football while girls tend to not join and just watch.

Al-Raja institute for children with mental issues

- 1- **Institutes' management structure.** The institute is a public institute run by a Manager, the Assistant and teachers, and is under the Department of Special Needs of DOLSA. It provides Kindergarten education and primary education special classes according to the students level, The institute follows the policies of DOLSA for the management, and the policies of the DOE for the school calendar, holidays. However, no specific curricula for children with mental disabilities are received from the DOE, as they currently not being developed. In previous years the institute used to receive specialized curricula from the Department of Mental Issues in Baghdad, however this has recently been suspended impacting the overall education of the institute.
- 2- **Funding.** All resources for the institute come through DOLSA: the institute has to make an official request to DOLSA based on the needs which are then addressed depending on the availability of funds and resources, and without a stable and regular channelling. Moreover, the teachers and all staff's salaries come from DOLSA and not from the DOE like in the case of the other two institutes for CwD.
- 3- **Funding and needs.** It was shared that the institute is not allowed to conduct fundraising according to the Iraqi law. Moreover, it was shared the funds received are just sufficient for covering the institute's basic needs. Whenever a need is present in the institute, an official request is sent to the Department of Special Needs of DOLSA, but the institute itself does not manage any money directly and therefore there is no management structure for it. However, some spontaneous donations in the past from community members and students' parents allowed the institute to purchase school equipment. Furthermore the staff salary has been described as low compared to other institutes, and often school personnel also resorts to using personal money for covering some of the school's needs (such as fixing the school's air conditioning, as well as painting the school's walls).
- 4- **Needs of the institutes.** It was shared that the needs of the institute include both basic school needs as well as specific challenges related to the disability of the students: need for larger school building (as the institute is the only public one for students with mental issues in Basra and welcomes a high number of students); overcrowded classes not allowing to have a properly conducive environment for learning as children with mental disabilities should not be grouped in classes with more than 7 students; the school staff needs to be trained on methodologies for teaching and dealing with students with autism, as often is not fully understood adequately; lack of school equipment; lack of specialized school curricula for students; students' violent reactions towards school staff, as often the personnel is

not adequately trained on how to deal with autism and other mental issues; lack of generator for electricity that results in students being frightened and agitated when the light goes off, affecting their learning;

- 5- **Needs of teachers.** The teachers often lack adequate training on mental issues and particularly on autism, and also lack the adequate education materials and equipment for teaching to students with mental issues.
- 6- **Support needed for solving the institutes' issues.** It was shared that the most important support would be rather than direct economic support, specialized trainings and equipment for teachers for improving the quality of education and overall environment.
- 7- **Institutes management structure for managing the funds.** The institute does not have any funding management structure as no money is directly managed by the institute.
- 8- **How the school is managed and parents participating in decision making processes.** In the institute a unique management structure involving the parents is present: for each class a social media group is created with the teachers and parents and social workers. Moreover, the parents can also join the bi-annual school meeting. Furthermore, for any urgent matter the Manager is open to receive parents and has a suggestion book where collects parents' feedback and keeps tracks of needs, that then shares with DOLSA for finding adequate solutions, when not possible to be solved without its support.
- 9- **NGOs support.** It was shared that Mercy Hands has been the first ever NGO to visit the institute and ask questions about the funding, needs and challenges, as well as providing support through a project.
- 10- **INGOs.** It was shared that no INGO has supported the institute.
- 11- **UN support.** UNICEF donated one caravan class to the institute during the previous year.
- 12- **Expanding/further developing the work of the institutes.** A high interest and motivation in upgrading the school services and teaching was shared, and it was underlined that the best possible support would be to receive specialized trainings on autism and mental disabilities for both the teachers and school staff, as well as to receive equipment for facilitating the teaching and ensuring and more conducive learning environment.

Conclusions

Based on the findings it is possible to conclude that:

- **Education for children with disability is highly centralized:** education for children with disability in Basra is centralized, as management decisions are taken by DoLSA while the institutes' managers are in charge of the day-to-day work and education activities. Furthermore, all major management decisions regarding education for children with disabilities are taken by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, which is located in Baghdad. This decision making structure is similar for all public education in Iraq, since all major management decisions related to education are taken by the Ministry of Education in Baghdad. Such education model appears to this date to be facing challenges, particularly in terms of lack of resources and missing tailored, well-structured and child-centred education for each kind of different disability.
- **Institutes for CwD in Basra have limited funding resources and unique challenges unlike other schools:** the resources channelled to institutes for CwD in Basra are often covering just basic needs such as staff's salaries and basic school equipment, and institutes are not entitled to manage any funds or to carry out fundraising. Moreover, such institutes face unique challenges related to unique needs of their students, which vary according to their disability and that require additional specialized equipment, training, curricula, activities, among the traditional challenges faced by public schools in Iraq (overcrowded classes with high teacher-pupil ratios; inadequate or missing school furniture; lack of updated school curricula; missing electricity; lack of sport and art classes; lack of laboratories and IT course; lack or inadequate teacher training).
- **The education provided by institutes for CwD in Basra is currently limited and there is a need for better linking them to higher education:** institutes for CwD are currently able to provide only primary and intermediate education, while major challenges for students with disabilities in accessing higher education still persist, due to lack of inclusivity into public schools, tailored curricula and adequate teachers' training.
- **The resources needed for improving the quality of education in the institutes for CwD in Basra are not just limited to economic ones, and also require equipment not always present in Iraq:** the institutes expressed a high need and interest in receiving direct specialized support rather than economic one, in the form of **specialized trainings for teachers** and school staff (for example on body and sign language for dealing with deaf students, specific trainings on autism), as well as **disability-specific curricula tailored to the needs of students**, as well as **disability inclusive specialized equipment for classes**, which however is not always available in Iraq (such as devices for laptops for blind students, walking sticks, sport equipment for blind people, specialized books, audio systems etc.).

- **The management systems of the institutes for CwD in Basra is family inclusive and based on a strong altruism of the schools' staff which could facilitate future interventions:** each institute for CwD has different channels through which parents can interact with the Managers and teachers, which could represent a strong potential for future education interventions. Moreover, the strong motivation of the school Managers and staff (who also dedicated personal resources to the school in some cases) could also facilitate future interventions.
- **Institutes for CwD in Basra have not been addressed by past development interventions:** according to the findings Mercy Hands has been one the first national NGOs to provide structured support to the institutes, and the support received by external actors appears to be limited, and further interventions focused on improving the quality of education would still be needed.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following actions would be recommended for improving the quality of education for CwD in Basra and better supporting the institutes for CwD:

- **For Donors:** it would be recommended to channel further resources for Southern Iraq, including Basra Governorate, for programs promoting high quality education for children with disability, and building a more disability inclusive education system.
- **UN Agencies:** it would be advisable to design long term programs for education in Southern Iraq including Basra Governorate, to be implemented by local partners, focused on provision of specialized trainings for schools' staff on disability inclusive methodologies, tailored equipment for improving the quality of education for CwD, as well as support for national authorities in developing disability- specific curricula.
- **Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs.** Tailored curriculums for different kinds of disability and for all levels of education, could highly benefit the quality of education of CwD and overall strengthen the education system, and developing them in close cooperation with sectorial experts and specialized development organizations would maximize their impact.
- **INGOs:** it would be suggested to channel further resources for improving the quality of education for CwD in southern Iraq, including in Basra Governorate, and design long term programs to be implemented by local partners, taking into account in the goals, outcomes, outputs and activities, the specific needs of institutes of CwD.
- **NGOs:** national and local organizations should prioritize as targets of their education interventions also institutes for CwD, aiming at addressing the specific needs of each one, both through projects as well as voluntary activities, when possible.