

# Disability Under Siege

*Delivering a transformational step change in education provision for children with disabilities in conflict-affected states*

**Newsletter  
Autumn 2020**

## **Network/Partner News**

Over the last 6 months we have managed to work through the bureaucracy and solidify the contractual agreements to incorporate 8 named partners across 4 countries so far into the Disability Under Siege Network. Our hope is to continue to expand the Network and build links that go far beyond the contractual to support and enhance technical communities of practice.



A central aim of the project is to create sustainable Networks that will drive the development of a robust evidence base to increase access to inclusive education. Over the coming months as we start to design our research call for proposals we are reliant on our existing network to reach further into the communities to engage those stakeholders well placed to support the endeavour. Further information on our Network Partners can be [found on our website](#).

## **Team News**

The Disability Under Siege Project Team has also changed and grown over the last 6 months. Vera Kubenz moved from Interim Project Manager to become a Research Fellow on the UNPRPD project (see below). Ted Tuthill joined as Project Manager in July and Sarah Martin as Project Administrator in October.

We have also been lucky enough to be joined by Dr Mustafa Attia to undertake the Literature Review in Jordan.

In Lebanon, CLS engaged Rhéa Dagher and Al Ma'mal Foundation engaged Yasmin Fqahaa as a Research Assistants to support with the review of arts and cultural practices and to map organisations engaged in, or who could potentially be engaged in supporting inclusive arts practices.



## **Funding and Research**

In August the Disability Under Siege Project received funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to support the development of the analytical framework, supported by UNPRPD to promote and support the implementation of a disability-inclusive response and recovery from COVID-19. The project will run for a period of 12 months from September 2020 to August 2021. Further information about the UNPRPD project can be found on the [Disability Under Siege website](#).



## Beirut Blast

On 4th August 2020 a blast in the port area of Beirut caused immense damage to the city killing approximately 200 people and leaving 7000 injured and over 300,000 displaced. 640 historical buildings and cultural centres were destroyed or damaged. Efforts to map the damage and plan the reconstruction of the city started soon after the blast.

In 1993, a huge reconstruction plan, following the Lebanese civil war marginalised and excluded many groups. In addition to gentrification and uprooting of locals in favour of big and international companies and businesses, the city remains widely inaccessible to many groups one of which are persons with disability. This sector of the Lebanese society has been widely forgotten in the reconstruction efforts. Beirut post-civil war in Lebanon, denied persons with disabilities from their basic rights such as access educational institution and health and leisure centres to name a few.

It was agreed with AHRC to draw down funds from the commissioning pool to support a rapid study to map and analyse the response and reconstruction

plans following Beirut Blast and examine the extent to which the needs assessment, response and recovery plans are inclusive of the needs of persons with disabilities.

Managed by CLS the study will feed into the development of the evidence base to help to understand the extent to which inclusive design is adopted in emergency needs assessment, recovery and reconstruction plans. CLS will:

- Map existing needs assessment that are being conducted by the government (mainly the army), INGO and UN agencies
- Analyse the recovery plans initiated by the Lebanese government, civil society and UN agencies
- Attend consultations meetings, analyse the minutes of these meetings, and review the response and reconstruction plans that are designed at the end of these consultations
- Conduct one to one interviews (most likely online) with the key stakeholders (army, municipalities, UN agencies etc).

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## Disability Under Siege Advisory Board

At the beginning of December the members of the [Disability Under Siege Advisory Board](#) were finalised. The Advisory Group will steer and advise the core team by providing expert, independent and strategic guidance during the design, development and delivery of the project.

Leading academics and key stakeholders from a range of disciplines and intersecting complementary expertise. Advisory Group Meetings will be structured to cover a range of agenda and be scheduled to occur at strategic junctures in the programme lifecycle to allow targeted input from Advisory Board Members. The Advisory Group will be chaired by Ibrahim Abdalah the Head of Disability, ESCWA in Lebanon.

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## Activities

### Country Literature Reviews

Literature reviews for the 3 countries (4 contexts) began in earnest in August 2020 with the aim to holistically map what published empirical research, policy documentation and grey literature there is relating to disability across the domains of relevance to the Disability Under Siege project areas of focus. This includes examining what is the existing evidence base concerning:

- Education and the public engagement of persons with disabilities
- Public health and wellbeing, including what are the prevalent family/community support networks and cultural attitudes
- The mapping of arts and cultural practices, movements and organisations (e.g. theatre/performing arts, literature, visual arts, media, social media, graffiti, political cartoons) intersecting with the field of disability.

Dr Maha Shuayb is leading on the Literature Review for Lebanon, Dr Mustafa Attia for Jordan and Professor Rita Giacaman and Dr Nazmi Al Masri covering the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Professor Anthony Downey is working with Research Assistants Rhéa Dagher and Yasmin Foqaha in Lebanon and OPT respectively to map the arts and cultural practices and establish linkages with potential research partners. Literature reviews will be finalised in early January 2021 to create an evidence base to inform the overall Disability Under Siege conceptual framework and proposed research themes.

### Arts and Cultural Practices Consultations

On the 10th and 17th November the Centre for Lebanese Studies and Tammei respectively held an online consultation to open a dialogue between disability practitioners and art institutions with interests in marginalization, specifically disability. 18 stakeholders from Lebanon and 22 from Jordan with links to disability-led organizations as well as those from arts and cultural groups and movements to feed into the ongoing review of literature and practice review undertaken by the Disability Under Siege Network. The consultation reports can be found on our website.

In February a policy workshop will be held to share the findings from the arts and culture review and to engage stakeholders to feed into the development of a policy paper. Read the full reports on our website under our [Current Research](#).

#### Arts and Cultural Consultation Questions

*What are the opportunities and barriers to promoting inclusive education through collaborative partnerships between cultural partners and disability-led organizations?*

*How could disability studies effect an alternative methodology for cultural practices to further engage with the politics of representing forms of exclusion?*

### Monthly Reading Group

A regular monthly reading group has been running since September where Disability Under Siege researchers have been to discuss selected readings related to disability and education in the context of the Middle East and conflict. Topics covered have included: the intersections of gender and disability, the biopolitics of disability and issues related to the 'measurement' of disability from a multi-disciplinary perspective. If you would like to join the Disability Under Siege Reading Group please email us at [disabilityundersiege@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:disabilityundersiege@contacts.bham.ac.uk)

#### Selected Reading Texts

*Measuring disability and monitoring the UN Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities: the work of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics.* J H Madans, M E Loeb & B M Altman, 2011

*The myth and reality of disability prevalence: measuring disability for research and service.* S McDermott & M A Turk, 2011

*LGBTQs and the DSM-5: A Critical Queer Response*  
A Daley & N J Mulé, 2014



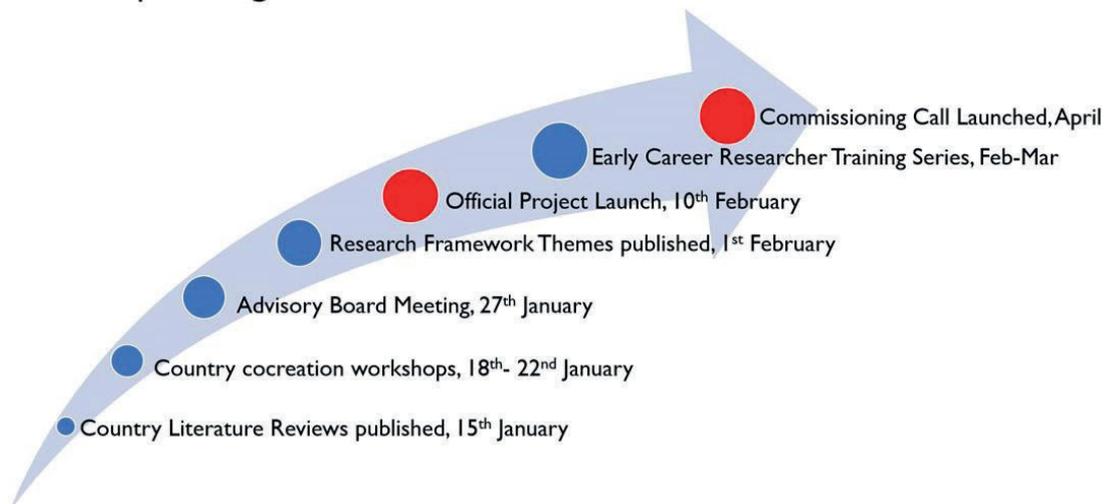
## Activities Planned

The first quarter of 2021 will see a busy period for the project as it prepares for the release of the Research Commissioning Call currently scheduled for April 2021. To prepare for the call there will be a series of events to ensure the effective engagement of key stakeholders and seek their support in co-creating a relevant and strategic research agenda. Some key dates and activities planned for the beginning of 2021:



1. Country Literature Reviews Published, 15th January
2. Country co-creation workshops, 18th-22nd January
3. Advisory Board Meeting, 27th January
4. Research Framework Themes Published, 1st February
5. Arts and Culture Policy Workshop 3rd February
6. Official Project Launch – 10th February
7. Project Team Safeguarding Awareness Training 16th February
8. Early Career Researcher Training Series, 22nd February – 26th March

### Upcoming Events and Activities



### Communications and media

For any further information or details about the Disability Under Siege project please visit our website at [www.disabilityundersiege.org](http://www.disabilityundersiege.org) or email us directly at [disabilityundersiege@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:disabilityundersiege@contacts.bham.ac.uk)



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