

# From Identification to Rehabilitation

Changing the Lives of Children  
with Intellectual Disabilities



By Manal  
al-Nashwi

**E**ducational institutions, particularly kindergartens, play a crucial role in the early intervention and detection of intellectual disabilities in children. This is the child's first contact with society outside its family that may have hidden the presence of a disabled child out of fear of stigmatization. This makes it difficult to identify children with disabilities. To address this issue, in November 2022, kindergarten teachers in Al-Bureij Refugee Camp in Gaza participated in a four-day training program titled "Early Detection of Disability and Referral." The project was financed by the German government through KfW Development Bank and carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Early intervention facilitates the education and rehabilitation of children with intellectual disabilities and improves their capacity to learn and develop. This training aimed to equip kindergarten teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize and address developmental delays and disabilities in young children. The curriculum covered a wide range of topics, including the application of developmental-behavioral measures, the identification of early childhood development milestones, and risk factors affecting early childhood development.



Maha Al-Qarnawi, one of the teachers, remarked, "We occasionally encounter children with intellectual disabilities whom we cannot enroll in kindergarten, and we do not know where to direct them." After the training, the kindergarten teacher referred Abdul Rahman\* for behavior therapy and rehabilitation to Al-Bureij Association. In addition to increasing the number of classrooms and adding a center for physical, occupational, and speech therapy, the KfW project will add two additional floors to the association's building. This will allow an increase in student enrollment.

The training was highly successful as it provided the community members with valuable information and skills, with pre-training assessments revealing an average knowledge of 39 percent, whereas participants scored an average of 85 percent following the training. Participants reacted positively to the training, and their feedback suggests that adding more practical training activities and information on child health and nutrition would be beneficial.

Article Photos ©UNDP/PAPP photo archive.

*Manal al-Nashwi is the project coordinator at Al-Bureij Association for the Rehabilitation of the Handicapped, Gaza.*

\*The name has been changed.

