The Global Action Week for this year, 2014, focuses on inclusive education for persons with disabilities to achieve the goals of Education for All identified by the Global Campaign for Education for All. As the number of disabled persons around the world is estimated at over one billion people, children, youth and adults, representing about 15% of the world's population, and in societies flaved by many legislative, environmental, cultural and social barriers, the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of social life and the identification of the concept of inclusive education as a group of values, principles and practices that seek effective education for all have become a significant challenge.

Based on the above, and as education must be inclusive on all levels and forms, the Regional Initiative for Adult Education Advocacy is working on strengthening and promoting inclusive adult education concepts and programs through lobbying, advocacy, innovation and coal for achieving the following goals:

- Train teachers and educators on basic skills that facilitate an inclusive and conducive environment for persons with disabilities.
- Provide all the prerequisites for the right of education for persons with disabilities in the adult education strategies, programs and plans.
- Train teachers and educators on basic skills that facilitate an inclusive and conducive environment for persons with disabilities.
- Create a database on students with disabilities and the opportunities open to them, especially data on male and female youth who have missed basic and regular education opportunities and adult education programs available to them.
- Include the issues of persons with disabilities in the media policies of various institutions in a way that reflect persons with disabilities rights, reset the prevalent stereotypes of disabilities, impact societal behavior positively to put an end to discrimination, and entrench the culture of diversity and the acceptance of the other. Persons with disabilities and their representing organizations should enjoy a complete and effective participation at all levels.

Moreover, the presence of an appropriate legislative framework and drafting national plans remain insufficient if it does not include the provision of capacities, resources and leadership to execute these plans. They will also remain insufficient if the necessary budgets are not allocated for them and if inclusive education policies are not adopted in all their details.

At the same level, the Arab countries lack data on disability and education, and a clear vision on how to qualify persons with disabilities to enter the labor market and to have an adapted labor market, including infrastructure, regulations and supportive environments. There are many disabled youth, male and female, who in the past were excluded from the education system and did not obtain equal opportunities in education, and are in need of adult education opportunities such as literacy programs, or opportunities to enhance vocational skills in preparation for their entry into the labor market.

On the other hand, the main challenges that must be addressed within the framework of existing education programs are the lack of reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities, which include conducive educational means and tools, such as Braille, academic sign language and simplified language, and environmental preparation appropriate to their disability and their requirements. This is in addition to the absence and weakness of teacher and educator qualification on how to communicate effectively with persons with disabilities, in addition to the lack of access to the physical, social, economic and cultural environment, and health, education, media and communications services.

Perhaps the biggest challenge faced by persons with disabilities in most of our communities is the attitudes and prevalent negative social stereotypes that consider disabled persons disabled on all levels and unqualified, or in many cases, pitiful. All these challenges, and others, push towards additional marginalization, isolation and exclusion.

In view of the above, we, the Arab Regional Adult Education Advocacy Initiative, believe it is necessary to raise our voices together, whether local, regional or international institutions, disabled persons or non-disabled, activists, educators and law professionals for the following goals:

- Lobby decision makers to create, activate and enforce legislative frameworks and laws to include persons with disabilities in work and education on an equal rights basis, and allocate the necessary budgets for these. Decision makers and governments should comply with Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as the key reference framework, and since most Arab countries have ratified it.
- Promote a supportive education culture that should enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities and their participation in various development processes through local and regional popular awareness and mobilization campaigns, especially with regard to persons with disabilities.
- Promote the concepts of adult education that are rights based. Adult Education concepts increase the understanding of community members towards their roles and responsibilities and empower them to demand their rights.
- Provide all the prerequisites for the right of education for persons with disabilities in the adult education strategies, programs and plans.
- Train teachers and educators on basic skills that facilitate an inclusive and conducive environment for persons with disabilities.
- Create a database on students with disabilities and the opportunities open to them, especially data on male and female youth who have missed basic and regular education opportunities and adult education programs available to them.
- Include the issues of persons with disabilities in the media policies of various institutions in a way that reflect persons with disabilities rights, reset the prevalent stereotypes of disabilities, impact societal behavior positively to put an end to discrimination, and entrench the culture of diversity and the acceptance of the other. Persons with disabilities and their representing organizations should enjoy a complete and effective participation at all levels.

All this should contribute to forming more positive positions towards persons with disabilities, whether in terms of the social view and/or inclusion in society.

Finally, we must invest in the discussion on the objectives of Education For All (EFA) and the goals of the MDGs post 2015, and deal with it as an opportunity to create inclusive education and labor markets through supporting and promoting adult education programs and the opportunities they present in various practical development aspects in the communities.

Overview on the Regional Initiative for Adult Education Advocacy:

The Regional Initiative for Adult Education Advocacy is a coordination among regional Arab networks and DVV International working on adult education and learning for life to unify efforts and cooperation in order to enhance inclusive education for adults through lobbying, advocacy and guaranteeing quality and innovation.

The Arab networks are the Arab Network for Literacy and Adult Education, headquartered in Egypt; the Arab Network Popular Education, headquartered in Lebanon; the Arab Campaign for Education for All, headquartered in Palestine and the Arab Network for Civic Education (ANHRE), headquartered in Jordan. DVV International is the Institute of International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association.

The networks represent and include hundreds of civil society organizations all over the Middle East.

The goal of this initiative is:

- Enhance the capacities of main stakeholders in advocacy and lobbying from a development standpoint
- Cooperate to enhance adult education and its developmental role
- Enhance networking and work on a regional and international level in the area of adult education.

Overview on disability in the Arab World: Most Arab countries adopt a narrow definition of persons with disability that includes only extreme disability. The social stigma of disability also affects percentages of announced disability.

In Jordan, the percentage of disability, rates of distribution and characteristics have still not been agreed upon. The “Reality of Disability in Jordan: Workforce and Unemployment” report funded by the Higher Council for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities, in cooperation with the Department of Statistics, indicates that the percentage of people with disabilities in Jordan is 2%.

The Council has executed several field surveys as part of its projects to expand community rehabilitation programs adopting the home-to-home survey in order to obtain more-realistic data. The results of these surveys were as follows: survey of disability in Ajloun Governorate in 2010, which included Qasabet Ajloun, Ein Janna and Anjara, the percentage of persons with disabilities was 6%. There was a survey of disabilities in Rwedesa area in 2010, and the disability rate was 9%. Moreover, the disabilities survey in Diriie in 2009 identified a disability percentage at 4.8%.

As for Egypt, the number of persons with disabilities reaches up to 7.5 million people, of which 5% only are accommodated within the schools of the total number of disabled persons of education age.

In Pakistan, the government welfare up until the year 2000 for persons with disabilities reached 20% compared with 80% in 2010. According to the latest statistics in 2010, the percentage of people with disabilities was 5% (8% for children with disabilities and 5% for adults.

In Palestine, the number of persons with disabilities in 2008 was over 150 thousand, but 83% were unemployed and the illiteracy was 50%. In a study on the reality of persons with disabilities in the Hebron area in 2008, it was identified that 37.8% of persons with disabilities did not enroll in schools and 53% of disabled persons are illiterate.

Other statistics of the Ministry of Education in 2012 indicated that 80% of children with disabilities of enrolment age are not enrolled in education and only 50% of the schools were conducive.

The number of persons with disabilities in 2008 was over 150 thousand, but 83% were unemployed and the illiteracy was 50%. In a study on the reality of institutions and their services, it was found that 95% of them are not qualified to receive persons with disabilities.