

mada

assistive technology center



Annual Report

2016

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

The state of Qatar has witnessed extensive development in recent years, in line with the Qatar National Vision 2030. The sustainable development of our country is dependent on all of those that live here, and as such, it is our responsibility to cater to everyone, and support their ability to live independently and derive equal opportunities when it comes to education, employment, and independent living.

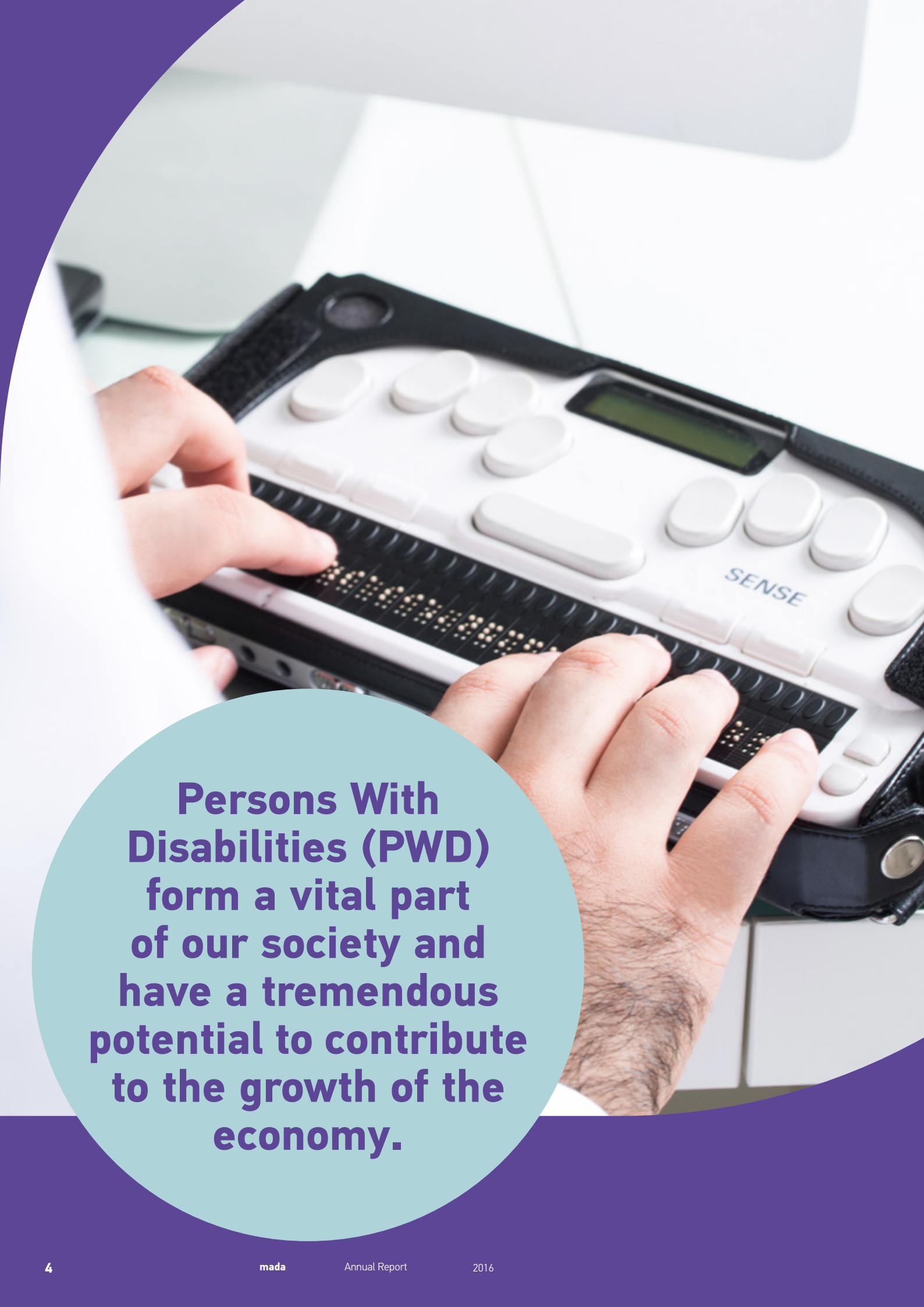
In line with this, Persons With Disabilities (PWD) form a vital part of our society and have a tremendous potential to contribute to the growth of the economy.

At the Ministry of Transport and Communications, we take this into consideration and support Mada to help cater to this underserved community, by leveraging on the capabilities of information and communications technology.

Since its inception, Mada has helped create a roadmap that guarantees PWD face a bright future in Qatar. To ensure that we achieve our goals, we will have to form strong bonds through collaborations with government entities, private entities, non-profits, families, and individuals, in order to ensure that PWD experience the same standard of living felt by other communities within the state. Only when we work hand in hand, we can achieve the strategic targets that Mada was established to accomplish.



His Excellency, the Minister of Transport and Communications
Jassim Saif Ahmed Al Sulaiti



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A MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Mada is proud to present this report, which lays out our strategy, what we do, future plans, and our success stories and projects for 2016. We are also sharing with you, our responsibility and commitment to ensure that we achieve our goals to help empower persons with disabilities and make sure they have accessibility through assistive technology.

At Mada, we strongly believe in creating an inclusive community, one that gives equal opportunities to everyone and preserves the rights of PWD. Not only does this mean that PWD can sufficiently and independently function within their communities, but it means that other members of their communities are also accepting and excited about their contributions.

Our main objective is to bridge the gap between PWD and their communities, by enhancing their access to ICT, because technology has become a defining aspect of modern cultures around the world. By assessing accessibility and creating innovative accessible centres, we are assisting PWD in their daily tasks and long-term goals with pragmatic ICT solutions, and ensuring their accomplishments can be limitless.

We aim to create awareness and adopt solutions for PWD by making sure that the latest in assistive technology hardware and software is available for all PWD in Qatar – but this is not all. Since 2010, we have helped unlock the potentials of many amazing people, some of which are working with us and are considered pivotal in our daily operations and strategic planning processes. We believe that there are a lot of PWDs who can achieve tremendous results when linked with proper evaluation and direction and then empowered to be a successful member of the community, not defined by the barriers they may face.

Even with the many success stories that we have seen, we are still at the beginning of this movement and there is a long road ahead. We believe in the potential of our community and we can't stress enough on how important it is for all of us to join hands, to achieve an accessible community that has no barriers to stop PWD from reaching the same accomplishments that everyone else can, in order to further develop the community we live in.

Maha Al Mansouri, Mada CEO



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WHO WE ARE

Mada Assistive Technology Centre is a non-profit organization committed to connecting persons with disabilities to the world of Information and Communication Technology. Founded in 2010, to accommodate the UN convention on PWD, in recognition that technology is pervasive across a breadth of private and public sector activities and inherent in the Ministry of Transport and Communications strategy, and works to improve digital inclusion for persons with disabilities in the State of Qatar.

Mada is committed to encouraging the development of innovative Assistive Technology in the Arabic language to support the needs of PWD in Qatar.

Our Vision: All Persons with a Disability in Qatar reaching their full potential through Information and Communication Technology.

Our Mission: Unlock the potential of all Persons with a Disability in Qatar by enabling both individuals and their environment through Information and Communication Technology.

HOW WE OPERATE

Mada operates through four core departments

Direct services: Deals with assessment, training, and provision of Assistive technology.

Centre of Excellence: Conducts research, publish papers, articles, and international best practices. The Centre of Excellence also encourages innovation of Arabic based AT.

Relationships and Partnerships: Create an appropriate platform in which Mada can scale AT services and raise community awareness through strategic initiatives.

Advisory and Policy: Establish and develop policies for e-accessibility and assistive technology within the PWD eco-system, and ensure the implementation of the world's best practices in ICT to support persons with disabilities.

OUR OBJECTIVES

Mada's strategic objectives include:

Education:

Support **80%** of students with disabilities in Qatar in accessing quality mainstream education by the end of 2018

Employment:

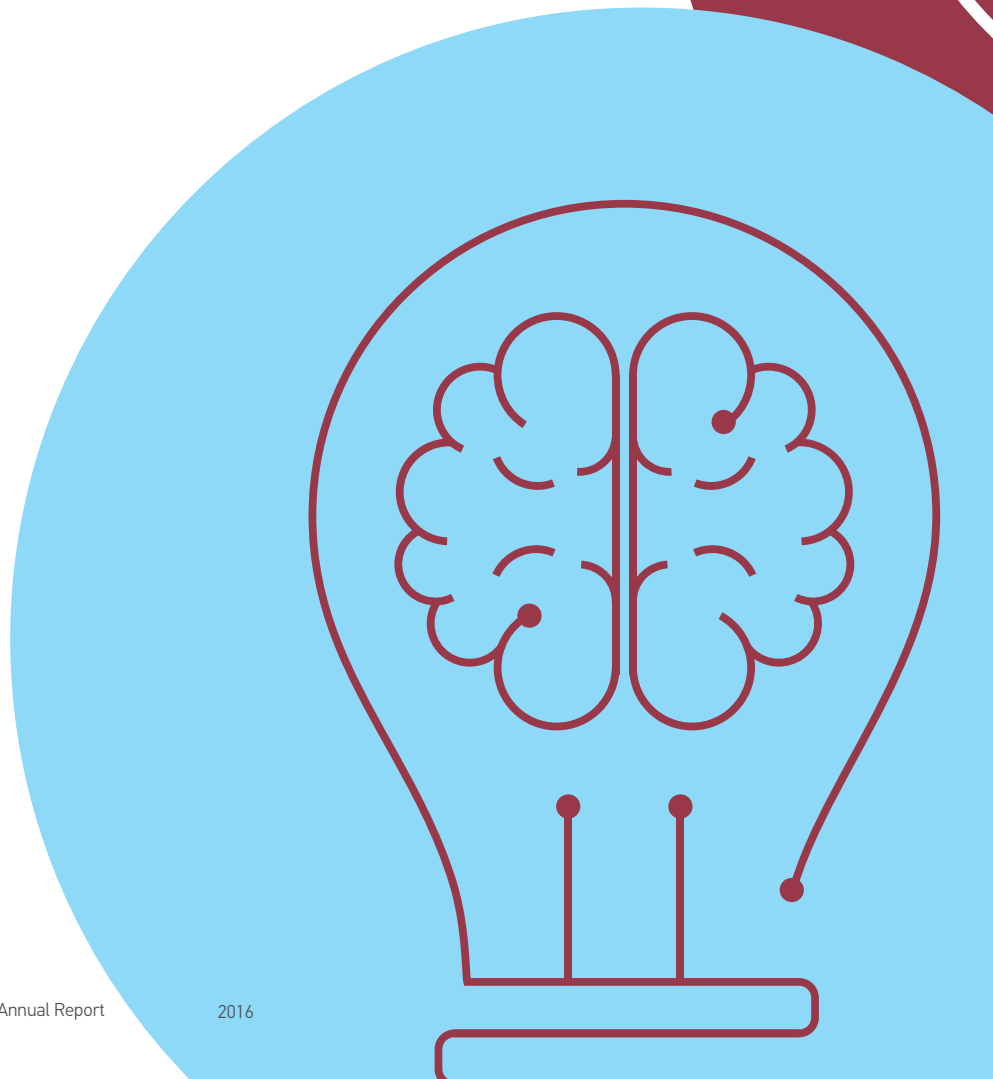
Reach a **25%** increase in the number of employable PWD in the local workforce by end of 2018

Community:

Support **25%** of PWD accessing the community and increase Qatar's e-accessibility score by 95% by the end of 2018

Awareness:

Increase in nation-wide awareness campaigns on PWD in Qatar by the end of 2018



OUR CORE SERVICES

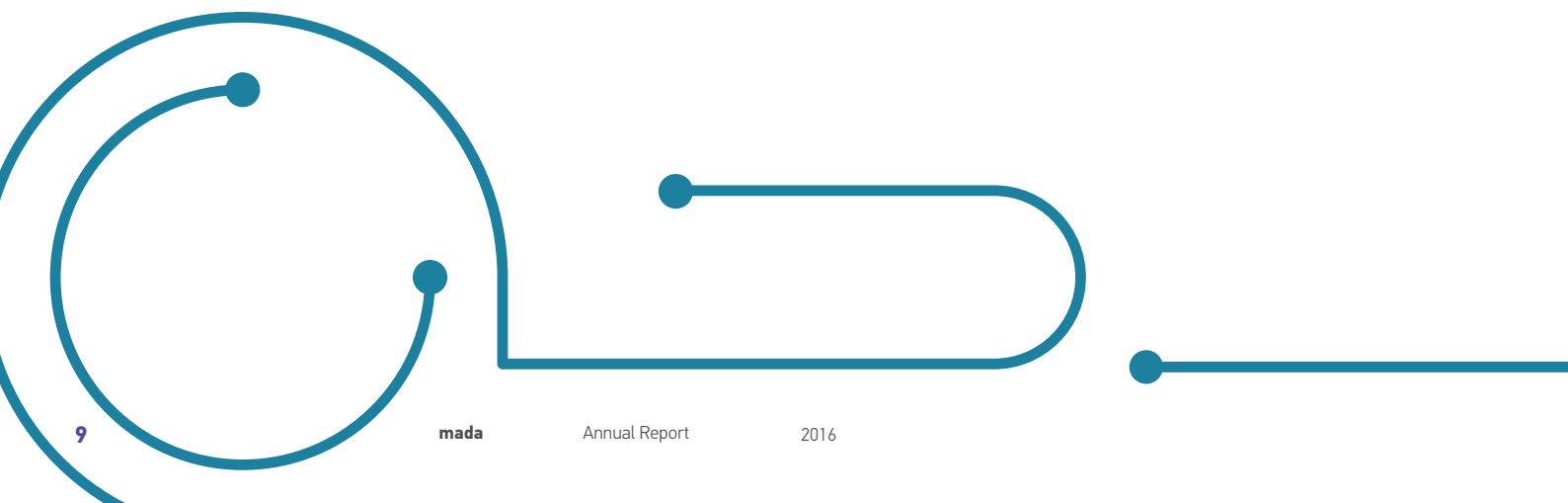
Mada's strives to establish various partnerships with different stakeholders in areas such as education and employment, aiming at increasing nationwide awareness of matters related to PWD. In order to build, develop and strengthen local capacities to contribute effectively to the empowerment of PWD and to ensure their accessibility, Mada works to build local capacities according to international best practices in each of these areas. The centre also conducts several awareness activities throughout the year to highlight the impact of assistive technology on the lives of Persons with Disabilities in Qatar and beyond.

Education has been Mada's primary area of focus as it has the potential to have a great impact on existing access to PWD in Qatar. Through the power of ICT and existing partnerships with stakeholders, including Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Mada is able to gauge its educational operations to gain the furthest possible reach within Qatar.

Mada profoundly aims to include PWD into mainstream society through employment and entrepreneurship. If PWD are meaningfully employed, their senses of independence and autonomy are strengthened, and as a result, their potential is maximized. Mada teaches PWD how to utilize ICT to help them gain employment, which will positively contribute to PWD themselves, as well as the workforce overall, on a local and global scale.

Focusing on the community aspect, Mada enables the independent living for PWD by way of modifications and training within their ecosystem through the use of ICT. Mada's goal is to assist PWD when fully integrating themselves into their communities, which includes feeling comfortable and self-sufficient without needing to depend on assistance from others. To empower PWD to live independently, and by providing the resources and guidance they need, Mada aims to improve the community's perception and awareness of PWD, in addition to influencing different players in the local community to adopt accessible practices within their areas of operations and expertise.

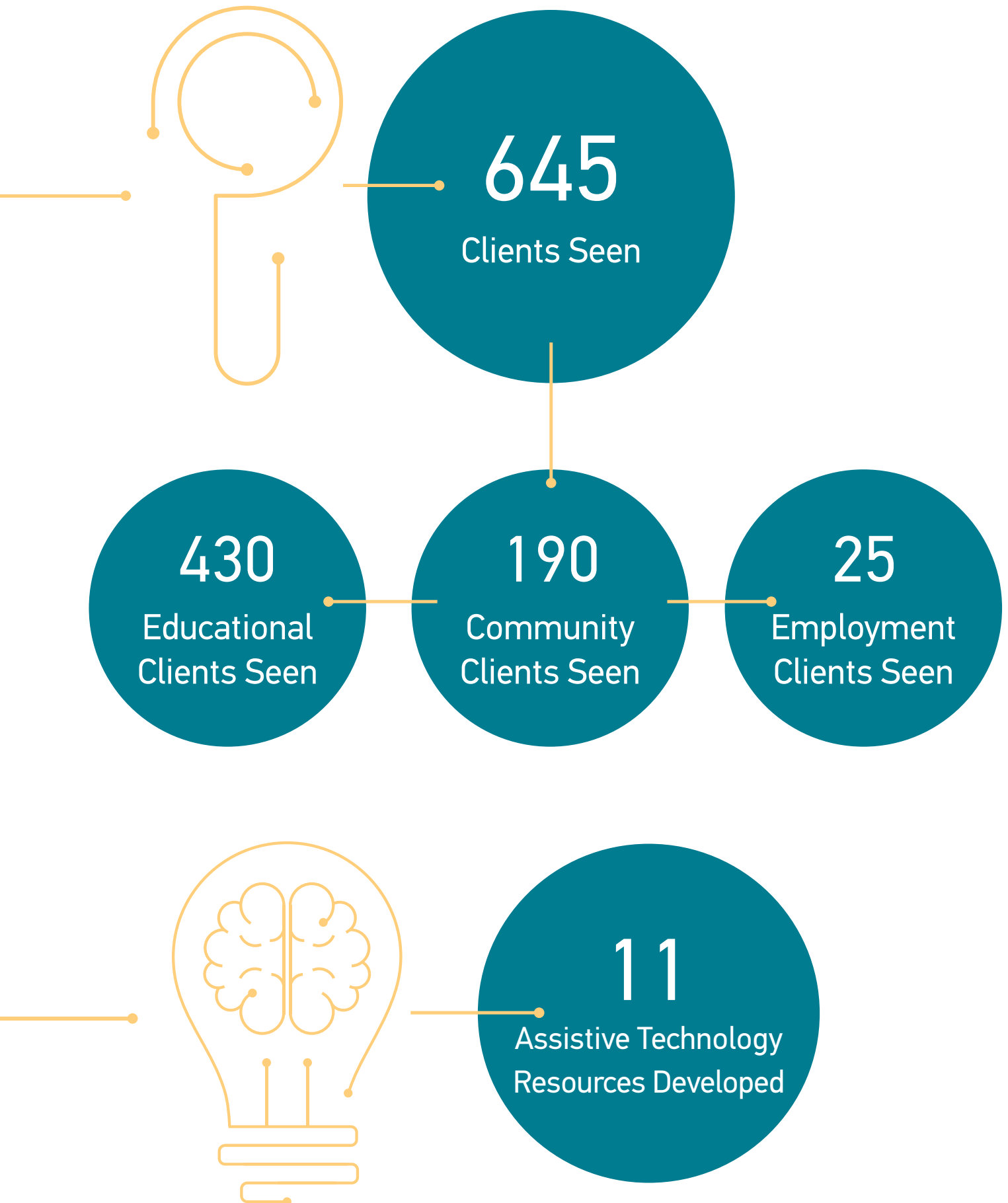
Mada also collaborates with developers of digital content and websites, to create platforms compatible with international standards to facilitate the use of electronic means by PWD.



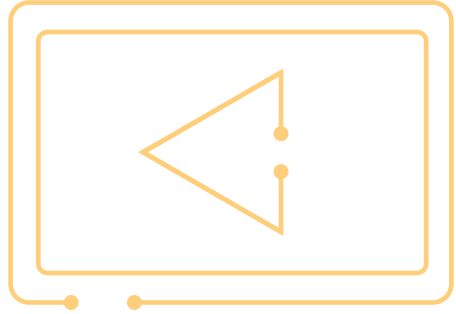


**Focusing on the
community aspect,
Mada enables the
independent living
for PWD**

STATISTICS

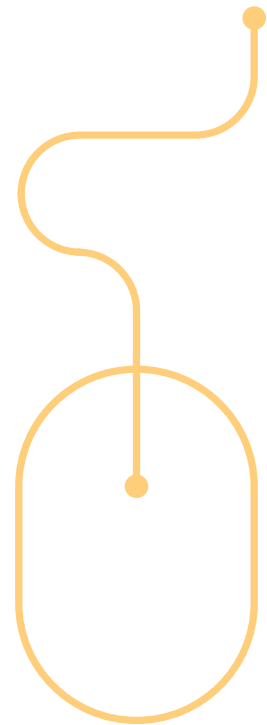


30
Websites
Audited



7
eAccessible
training sessions

The Average
eAccessible score is
84%
as measured by
Mada's eAccessible
monitor.



OUR STORIES

At Mada, we place emphasis on creating a truly inclusive and independent community in Qatar through the use of ICT. We are a community where everyone regardless of their ability can thrive, and where PWD have the opportunity to participate in social life, and to realise their dreams and aspirations. Together with our partners, we have worked to uplift the PWD community and bridge the gaps so that they can function sufficiently and independently, and we have been able to do this with the help of technology. Below are some of our success stories.

Bridging the Communication Gap in the Arab World – Tawasol

Individuals with profound speech and language difficulties rely on Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems to supplement or replace existing speech in order to effectively communicate with others. According to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), “AAC includes all forms of communication (other than oral speech) that are used to express thoughts, needs, wants, and ideas. We all use AAC when we make facial expressions or gestures, use symbols or pictures, or write”.

Speech-Language Therapists and Special Education Teachers in the Arabian Gulf constantly face challenges in using appropriate symbols for AAC systems, as they have to depend on westernized symbols. Most of the free and paid-for AAC symbol sets available in the market, have been designed in the USA and Europe for word lists in English and European languages. These symbols often tend to have different cultural and contextual representations when presented within the local Arab society.

Additional challenges towards using westernized symbol sets within the region, involve therapists and teachers being from a different language and cultural background compared to the AAC users.

The larger population in the Arabian Gulf States is composed of expatriates, leading towards the need to effectively communicate with people having different dialects and language fluencies. Furthermore, the Arabic language is spoken differently when communicating in formal Arabic and colloquial Arabic. All such factors are related to the need to effectively communicate within a society with varying verbal communication languages/styles, along with different interpretation of visual symbols on a cultural and contextual level, which have raised the need to develop an AAC symbol set to cater for the concerned population.

In 2013, Mada embarked on a project to develop an AAC symbol set called Tawasol Symbols, which focuses on the Qatari Arabic language and the modern standard Arabic MSA.

The project was launched in collaboration with the University of Southampton and Hamad Medical Corporations, and funded by Qatar National research Fund (QNRF). The initial challenge was to select a suitable set of word and symbol lists that were culturally and contextually appropriate towards the local society

The process began by collating word lists from AAC users attending relevant institutions (school and clinics). The next step involved comparing this list to a list of the most frequently used words in spoken Arabic, as well as written Arabic for literacy schemes. This allowed Mada to come up with a selection of core symbols and fringe vocabularies. A dedicated



online platform was built to compare the newly developed Arabic symbols with existing English language symbols from the ARASAAC symbol set. Furthermore, the online platform allowed for a collection of votes and comments from evaluators, who helped towards selecting the final set of Arabic symbols. The pool of evaluators consisted of Linguists, AAC users, Parents, Therapists, and Teachers. Multiple cycles of voting were conducted before deciding on the final set of symbols.

Currently, the Arabic symbol set is available for use through its website www.tawasymbols.org alongside with the ARASAAC English symbol set.

HOW WE ARE CHANGING LIVES

● Bridging the communication gap for toddlers – Fatma’s story

Fatma is a toddler with Downs Syndrome and developmental delay who enjoys participating in all play activities, particularly singing children’s songs. When this three-and-a-half-year-old sees other children at play, she attempts to join them, she also tries to join in when her siblings/CRD children are singing or participating in group activities but feels frustrated when she cannot. In fact, these frustrations are often witnessed when she cannot communicate her choice of play.

Fatma interacts with her family members by smiling, laughing, and pointing to objects, she only vocalizes and uses a few intelligible words to communicate, particularly with her mother. Her family tries to help her communicate and be a part of the family activities, but they have to depend on a lot of guessing when it comes to what she prefers. Her mother has started to use some pictures and videos with her and her responses are quick and do not show any frustration.

Following an evaluation and trials of a few devices, the Mada team decided that a portable screen device was appropriate for Fatma as it would not only assist her in participating in activities but also would have a positive impact on her overall communication skills.

● Global developmental delay – Hessa’s Story

Hessa is a two-year-old girl diagnosed with global development delay. She has great difficulty controlling her muscles and as a result, her coordination and speech are affected. Hessa was referred by the Early Intervention Program at Rumailah Hospital’s Child Development Centre, she was not developing at the rate anticipated by the specialists working with her. Her lack of interest was demoralizing for her family and particularly for her mother, who was keen to nurture their relationship, increase her daughter’s ability to communicate and share experiences through play.

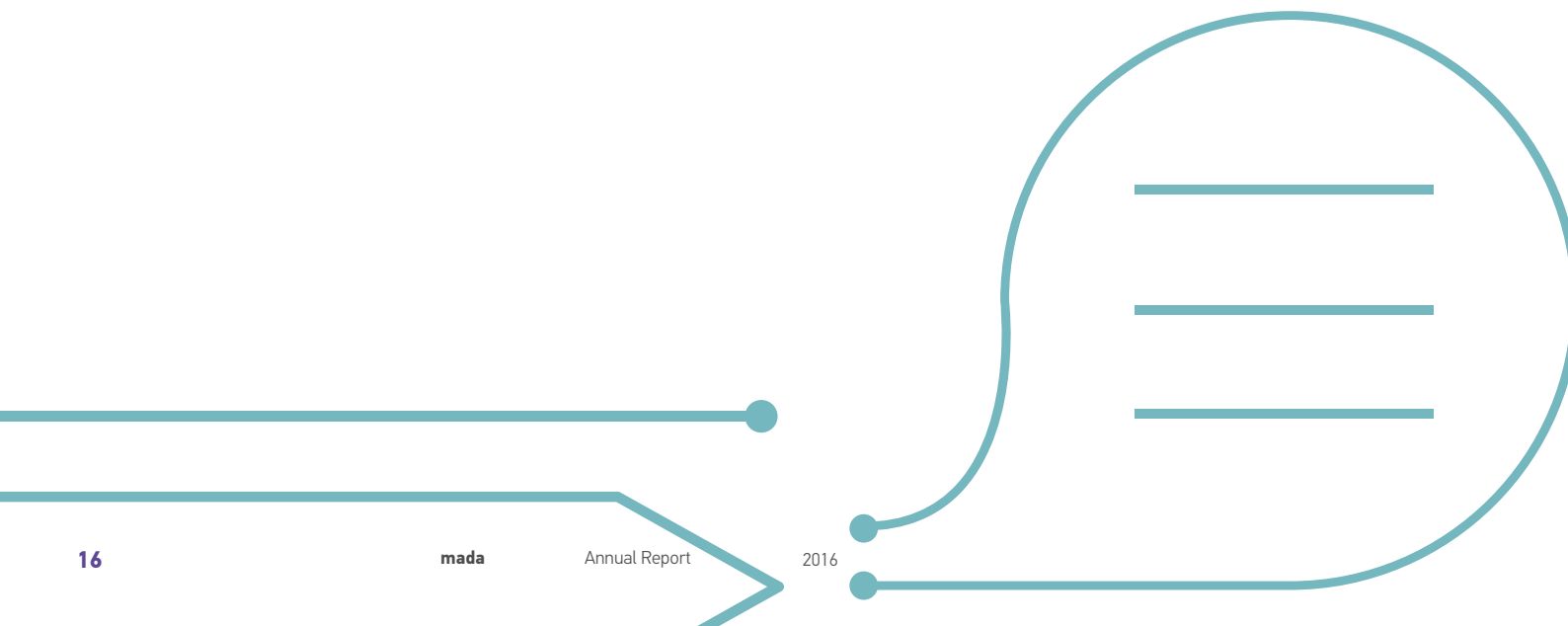
Before introducing Hessa to the idea of interactive software, she needed to develop the concept of cause and effect. This would help her realize that she could have some control over her environment. There are many ‘cause and effect’ apps which make creative use of color and sound to show children that they can affect their environment in an exciting and entertaining way. We showed two of these to her, and she quickly learned that she was making things happen on the screen. However, it soon became apparent that she had to use her whole body to try to point at the screen, in other words, she needed to develop her fine motor skills and work on finger isolation.



Using another app, Hessa soon realized that different movements had very different impacts. If she banged on the screen, the character looked injured and if she gently petted the screen, it made a contented, purring sound. Hessa also enjoyed another basic early literacy app, which enables children to interact with animations and trace the shape of letters on screen with their fingers. The games reinforced her learning as she began to build letters independently for the first time.

Her understanding and communication skills have further improved with another unique program, which gives parents and teachers the scope to create customized content by selecting their own images, and recording the voices of family and friends. Hessa has found it particularly useful for learning new vocabulary and happily points to a picture and activates that are associated with the audio description.

Today, Hessa can focus fully on an activity, accomplish tasks and most importantly enjoy spending time with her mum. This has brought the family much closer, as it has provided a means for other members of the family to get to know her better. Hessa is making significant developmental progress socially, emotionally and physically. It has proven to be an invaluable learning tool for her.



PAVING THE WAY FOR BEST PRACTICE IN ACCESSIBILITY FOR PWD

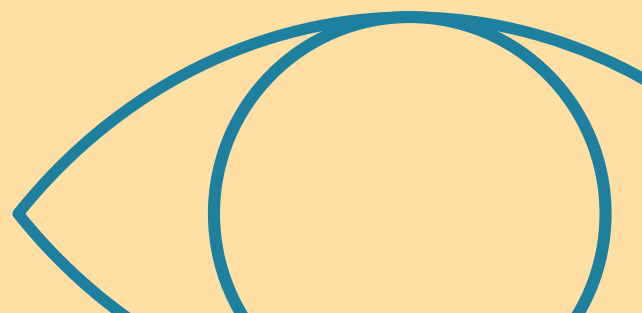
We are truly passionate about the work that we do and we are working hard to inform stakeholders about Persons with Disabilities in Qatar, and the steps that we are taking to enable a more inclusive life for them. Many of our research and reports are a first-of-their-kind in the region, and provide stock-take of the life PWD in Qatar are living, and how this life will be improved through the ICT provided by Mada.

NAFATH

Part of our efforts to educate the community about issues related to PWD, include the launch of our newsletter, NAFATH, with the aim of keeping our stakeholders and communities informed about assistive technology. Our digital newsletter will be published every three months and will be available on our online platform mada.org.qa. and also will be printed. NAFATH discusses our latest achievements, research, trends and insights into ways companies can become more accessible to PWD. While the focus of our newsletter is on the region itself, we also look at international best practices and how we can learn from them to improve our offerings and enhance our community in respect to what it offers to PWD.

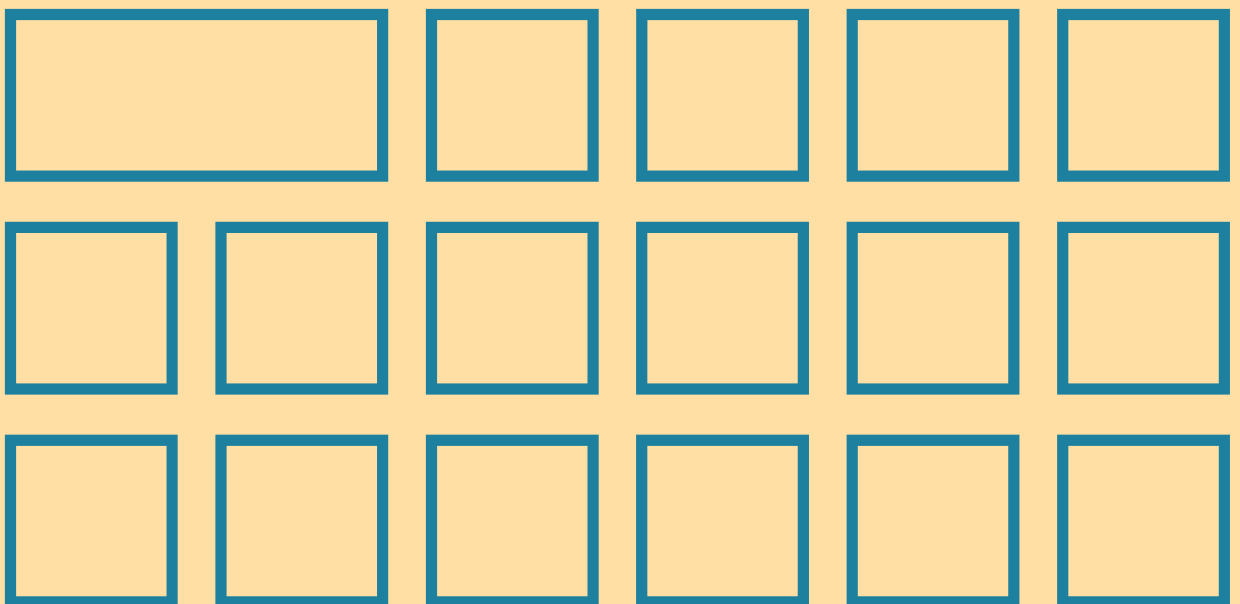
Aging and Technology: A Review of Current Practice

This report launched in 2016, on Aging and Technology seeks to identify emerging ways in which older people can benefit from technology. It identifies the potential that technology has for older users, helping them remain active, healthy and connected to their family and community. While there are some older people who do not generally use technology, many are open to new experiences with technologies and are willing to learn. This document examines the diverse range of needs and experiences of the older generations to determine an approach that meets those needs while understanding some of the issues faced by this generation. This document takes an in-depth look at how assistive technology can aid continued participation in daily activities by enabling many people to live as independently as they wish. This report recognizes the importance of assistive technologies for mobility, independent living, and personal care, but focuses more on the social and emotional needs of the users.



Creating Accessible Services to Support Entrepreneurs with Disabilities in Qatar

Our report launched in 2016, aims to ensure that commercial bodies such as incubation centres, commercial banks, development banks and all public and private entities, which work in the area of supporting entrepreneurs to understand the needs of PWD within Qatar. It outlines a number of actions they can take to address those needs, and help entrepreneurs with a disability, bring their ideas to the market. The report recognizes the additional barriers faced by entrepreneurs with disabilities in entering entrepreneurship or self-employment and starting a business. The challenges addressed in the report include public attitudes and expectations, inaccessible spaces and programs, and a lack of relevant business knowledge and skills, which may contribute to deterring Persons with a Disability from starting their own businesses. It offers solutions in the form of effective advisor and mentor training, financial and non-financial support, including technology support, and the many role models with a disability have successfully started businesses around the world.



OUR DISABILITY GUIDES

Our Disability Guides were created to facilitate the interaction between persons with disabilities and their surrounding environments. Mada has published three different reports, thus far, to establish and deal with bridging the communications and lifestyle gap for PWD.

Working with PWDs

The aim of this report is to assist the better integration of PWD in the workplace, particularly for employers. It offers insights into best practices employers and colleagues can and should adopt when it comes to the treatment of employees with disabilities. These best practices have been created with an aim to guarantee both the fair treatment and equal opportunities for PWDs, while highlighting the benefits of hiring them.

Disability Communication Guide

The primary purpose of this report is to ensure that people have access to the best practices when it comes to communicating with PWD. The report offers the reader an insight into the different disabilities they could encounter both in the workplace and social situations, and dispenses directives and advice on dealing with each disability in a way that is acceptable and comfortable for the PWD. It identifies the challenges and provides better practices for communication.

Welcoming Customers with Disabilities

PWDs seek the same services that their peers receive, both in professional and social situations. This report highlights the practices companies can adopt to secure PWD as customers, by catering properly to their needs. Mada has researched the accessibility services and communications that will be appreciated by disabled customers.



OUR PARTNERSHIPS

Mada and Qatar University

We recently joined forces with Qatar University (QU) to provide assistive technology to disabled students on its campus. Education is one of the three key pillars of our mission at Mada, and many of our services revolve around this area. We believe that education has the potential to positively impact the PWD community in many ways. It is where the groundwork for social integration is laid, and it makes PWD and their communities aware that disabilities do not subtract from capabilities. We are honored to have made a meaningful imprint on the campus of Qatar University and to facilitate educational opportunities for students with disabilities. The newly opened station at Qatar University is equipped with all of the essential assistive technologies necessary for the success of students with disabilities.



Mada and Shafallah

Mada and the Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs signed a three-year partnership agreement to promote assistive technology for persons with disabilities. Assistive technology, which includes assistive, adaptive, and rehabilitative devices for persons with disabilities promotes greater independence by enabling them to perform tasks that they had difficulty with or were unable to accomplish altogether. The impact of the assistive technologies can be seen in both the learning and communication of PWD and their environment, it can further enable their social inclusion, and have a positive impact on their vocational training. Examples of technology, include eye gaze systems, accessible keyboards, and mice, learning software, switches, augmentative and alternative communication devices, amongst others. Through the partnership, Mada would be able to help Shafallah students find the right assistive technologies suited to their unique requirements.

Mada and Shafallah are also conducting a building capacity program. Shafallah employees from various departments are undertaking a tailored training program to enhance assessment capabilities of their student's needs when it comes to assistive technologies. The culmination of this program will result in Shafallah center's ability to offer assistive technology services directly to their students. The program commenced in October 2016 and will conclude in February 2018.

Mada and Hamad Medical Corporation (HMC)

Mada is working together with HMC to help ensure that PWD are able to enjoy active participation in everyday activities, to improve the quality of their lives through our joint Assistive Technology services. Children and adults with disabilities are offered a wide variety of services across the various departments in HMC. These are delivered by occupational and speech therapists, and teachers who receive specialist support and training from Mada specialists. This collaboration was entered into with the Qatar National Vision's aim to service the needs and enable the aspirations of persons with disabilities in the Qatari community, in mind. In addition, the cooperation will enable Mada and HMC to streamline their efforts and resources in the development of services for persons with disabilities and providing assistance and consultations to patients with disabilities at HMC.



Mada and Qatar Foundation for Elderly People Care (IHSAN)

In 2016, we initiated a partnership with IHSAN. We signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for three years, in which Mada is committed to helping IHSAN through providing assistive technologies for elderly people whenever required. As part of the MoU, we participated in training programs whereby we offered two training activities to 80 elderly persons to help them with the use of smartphones. We also provided those taking part in the training initiatives 80 smartphones to use. In addition to this, we offered IHSAN a full e-accessibility audit for their website. Following the success of the initial training activities, we will be conducting additional training in 2017.



OUR EVENTS

Second National Autism Forum 2016

The forum is part of Mada's continued endeavor to enable all PWD with equal access to life, while simultaneously supporting the development of the overall ecosystem in the country to integrate their requirements. The forum aimed to educate parents and community members and to create awareness, obtain integration, and gather decision makers to contribute to improving the services for the autism community throughout Qatar. During the forum, Mada's commitment as a public non-profit organisation was to raise awareness about the rights of the Persons with Disabilities and showcase all their needs on a suitable platform. Led by the Minister of Transport and Communications, HE Jassim bin Saif al-Sultaiti and attended by HE the Minister of Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs, HE the Minister of Education and Higher Education, and HE the Minister of Public Health. The event spared no attempt in supporting and promoting the initiatives and efforts to build awareness about the rights of Autistic individuals.

Mada's first autism forum, a two-day "Autism Parents' Network Forum", was held in April 2014, with the theme of "Comprehensive Care for Autism Families."

Mada's International Day of Persons with Disabilities

In accordance with the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, which is celebrated around the world on December 3, Mada launched a campaign to educate the general public in Qatar about its role and to raise awareness about the capabilities of Persons with Disabilities. Through the campaign, we managed to encourage the local community to understand that disability does not mean incapability. Mada's International Day of Persons with Disabilities campaign was held for the entire day on December 3, 2016, and helped spread the word, balloons were distributed with three main messages printed on them: Enable everyone's ambitions, Access to Success, and Forget Disability – Talk Ability.



OUR ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCREDITATIONS

Mada's Website Accreditation Program is a unique and valued way to demonstrate our stakeholders' forward-thinking approach to barrier-free web design, and their unwavering commitment to putting people first. After undergoing our website accessibility consultancy, training and satisfactory compliance with recommendations, the participating organizations will receive Mada's Website Accessibility Accreditation Badge to place on their website. Qatar institutions were recently awarded the Mada Access Certified Award, including the Information Systems Department of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Qatar e-Government Portal (Hukoomi) for their applications of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0 AA, which aim to ensure that websites have accessible features for Persons with Disabilities.

OUR RESEARCH AND STUDIES

ICT Assistive Technology Private Sector Innovation Study

Mada commissioned this study to understand and evaluate the private sector and its approach to innovation both within its home markets and abroad. As such, the study undertook to identify which strategies work within the local context and identify tentative steps the private sector can take to improve their innovative footprint within Qatar. The study shed light on the private sector disability industry, and how such innovation could be applied in the local context. As such, we offered several recommendations to drive advancement in this field.

A Review of the Policy and Regulatory Framework for Accessibility in Qatar

Mada explores the current legal landscape for Persons with a Disability in Qatar. This report seeks to identify the existing policy framework within the state and then to compare and contrast that status with best practices drawn from across the world. To complete this research, Mada committed significant resources to prepare the report. The established team conducted wide-ranging desk research on current policy in Qatar and best practice from across the world, drawing upon evaluations of those policies prepared by a range of bodies.



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