

Commitment:

Statement of Continued Support by the Chief Executive June 14, 2019

To our Stakeholders:

I am pleased to confirm that The Lebanese Down Syndrome Association continues to support and will always dedicate its efforts to the implementation of the United Nations Global Compact Ten Principles in the areas of mainly Human Rights, Health, Education, and Labor. This is our Communication on Engagement with the United Nations Global Compact.

In this Communication on Engagement, we describe the actions that our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its Principles as suggested for an organization like ours.



Sincerely Yours,

Board of Directors,  
Lebanese Down Syndrome Association  
Beirut, Lebanon

## Who are we:

The Lebanese Down's Syndrome Association (LDSA) was founded by a group of parents in May 1998 as a non-profit independent organization. The association has a three-fold mission of advocacy, education and research.

LDSA strives to build an inclusive society, which acknowledges the abilities of all people, particularly those with Down Syndrome [DS], supports their needs, and encourages the achievement of their full potential for successful and productive lives, as individuals and as citizens.

## Our commitments to the global compact goals

### In Education:

The Association was a key factor in the development of the first pilot project that became a prototype of a totally inclusive education in Lebanon where all the students learn together in the same class in the basic education cycle.



In addition, the association and through collaboration with the American University of Beirut continuing education center, was able to initiate a university based education program for students with special needs and particularly young adults with Down syndrome. As a result, the first cohort of students is scheduled to graduate from the University with degrees in June 2020. This initiative allowed for a lot of chances in which advocacy and awareness were exercised. Many of the university students were interested in working in the project as volunteers and they established good friendship with the program students. Students were also asked to participate in special education and psychology classes as presenters talking about who they are and how their condition affects their life.



**AUB's Next Step Towards Inclusion**

The conventions of life go as follows: you're born, you go to school, graduate university, start a career. But is that always the case?

**Maria Harb | Staff Writer**

The exceptions are plentiful. One of them tends to lie in the lives of individuals born with special needs. For the longest time, they've struggled to fit into the so-called societal protocols, not because of their personal struggles, but because of those inflicted upon them by society. Whether these restraints are organizational in nature, like a lack of inclusion in schools, or simply behavioral ones, they tend to contribute to the marginalization of these individuals. But not for long. Thankfully, emerging movements advocating the rights of individuals with special needs are on the rise, and they're closer to you than you think.

Next Step is a certificate program offered at the Continuous Education Center at AUB. It targets young adults who face intellectual difficulties and is the first of its kind in the MPNA region - aiming to provide them with adequate skills to lead independent lives and be fully integrated within their community and its work fields. On the long run, the program aims to break the existing barriers and

open doors for people who are seen to be disadvantaged by their disability. The students go for lunch at AUB cafeteria, enjoy music lessons, and attend money management and employment classes. During the week, while off campus, they visit firms around the country to learn about employment expectations. Some of the Next Step students attended an event hosted by the Visual Arts Club. They took part in a painting night alongside their AUB peers. The event hall was filled with students expressing themselves creatively, and more significantly - socially. Paintings were created, friendships were formed, barriers were broken, and doors were open.

Next Step should be the means to allow any student with difficulties to practice self-autonomy, choose a future, gain the skills needed to achieve independence and become a productive citizen in the community. This, indeed, is the next step, the next step towards a better future for those who have been deprived of the means for it to occur.

**"Next Step is a certificate program offered at the Continuous Education Center at the American University of Beirut."**

**In employment:**

The association was able to establish good communication with several work establishments that would open their doors to the people from the association to work with them. Through this collaboration, the first employee with down syndrome was hired with a salary and social security. Now the establishment has 5 individuals working in their kitchen.



In addition, through the collaboration between the association and another establishment, a coffee shop was opened its doors with its employees being people with Down syndrome or similar abilities.

### **On advocacy and awareness**

The members of the association have been actively engaged in several activities in schools, universities and other establishments to promote a positive image of people who have Down syndrome. Seminars with parents, families, schools, medical establishments, and many others continue to take place.

Several drives have taken place to advocate as well lately a 15 seconds clip was broadcast on the main TV channels calling for the eradication of the work Mongol and mongolism. The association has its facebook and Instagram accounts to strengthen its visibility and use that to advocate.

This year and during the World Down Syndrome Day, an association member was invited to give a presentation about the association and inclusion in Lebanon at the United Nations in New York.

**Others:**

The association also continues to participate with other NGOs and relevant associations that are interested in creating and reviewing policies and directives for the human rights initiatives. It also works on attending most of the events that take place via the UN global compact network.

The association will continue to work towards the establishment of its goals and the attainment of the rights of the individuals with down syndrome and their families.

Thank you and best regards.

The Board of Directors  
The Lebanese Down Syndrome Association  
June 14, 2019