

مدا mada

مركز
التكنولوجيا
المُساعدة
قطر

qatar
assistive
technology
center

Annual Report
2011 / 2012

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The power of ICT stems from its ability to transform lives and empower individuals. With that in mind, a dedicated Assistive Technology Center has been established in Qatar to enable people with disabilities to experience technology. As a forward looking nation, we should always ensure that the disabled are not just able to live full, empowered and satisfying lives, but also enjoy the vast opportunities and endless doors that ICT is opening to them every day.

Since opening its doors in 2010, Mada has benefited numerous people by placing much-needed technologies in homes, schools, and workplaces across the country so that the disabled in Qatar can truly live in an accessible ICT ecosystem. Last year witnessed some important achievements for Mada, most notably in the area of developing digital access technologies in Arabic language.

But with all advancements and achievements in Assistive Technology, there has been a need for a nation-wide policy to accelerate Qatar's progression towards becoming an inclusive society in which all its members have equal rights to access ICT, regardless of their disabilities. The introduction of a National e-Accessibility Policy, which encourages all public sector digital platforms to adhere to international standards of accessibility, ensures that an inclusive society is more than just a goal but an actionable vision in which inclusive design will be administered in several areas across Qatari society. The success of this vision is dependent on combined efforts across all sectors of the ICT community, and as such, I encourage all of our partners in Qatar to play an active role in ensuring that digital content is accessible to people with disabilities.

I would like to thank all of our dedicated partners, who continue to provide us with invaluable advice on various ways in which Mada can have the greatest impact. Most importantly, I would like to thank the countless people who have come to the Center over the past year and shared their experiences with us. Together, we will expand Mada's services ensure we can reach out to all those who seek to benefit from Assistive Technology and an advanced ICT sector.

Thank you,

Dr. Hessa Al Jaber
Chairman of the Board



The second year of operations at Mada called upon the team to build upon and extend the services that it offered to meet the needs of a larger number of disabled people within Qatar. During this time, we also identified a need to extend our activity further and to strive to bring new services and products forward to address needs in greater depth and breadth.

I'm pleased to say that the last year has been an extremely successful one for Mada in delivering those ambitions. The team has surpassed expectations in all areas, reaching more people with a wider range of services than ever before. This success was seen across all of our services including advice, assessment, training, research and provision.

There were many highlights, and we are particularly proud of the successful launch of Mada e-Accessibility services and our involvement of the formulation of the National e-Accessibility policy; our work with schools to build a process of early intervention in the lives of people with a disability; the launch and implementation of new Arabic Assistive Technologies; and the delivery of accredited training courses in Arabic and English to professionals in Qatar.

All of these achievements alone have provided Mada with a firm basis upon which to build and extend still further in the year ahead.

The success of Mada this year would not have been possible without the involvement of many people throughout Qatar, to whom I wish to extend our gratitude. These include our many partner organizations such as ictQatar, the Shafallah Center for Children with Special Needs, Hamad Medical Corporation, the Al Noor Institute for the Blind, Enable Ireland and the Assistive Technology Industry Association.

I also wanted to thank our board members for their invaluable leadership. Having the opportunity to work with leaders from ictQatar, Microsoft, Qatar National Bank, Qatar Telecommunications (Qtel), Vodafone and Shafallah gives Mada the opportunity to gain much needed advice and expertise.

Finally, a word of thanks to our many volunteers who support us out in the wider community and provide assistance within the Mada center itself. We owe so much of our success to the energy, commitment and passion of all those involved in our work. While there is a great challenge in creating equal access to technology for all, the commitment to achieving this in Qatar is greater still, and continues to be the driving force behind our work.

Sincerely

David Banes
Chief Executive Officer

Mada (Qatar Assistive Technology Center) is honored to have the opportunity to work with a dynamic Board of Directors that brings together committed decision makers and experts from the world of ICT, as well as dedicated individuals who have shown exemplary service in the lives of people with disabilities.

2011/2012 Mada Board of Directors:

Dr. Hessa Al Jaber,

Secretary General, ictQATAR

Dr. Nasser Marafih,

Group CEO, Qatar Telecommunications (Qtel)

Mr. Ali Shareef Al Emadi,

Group CEO, Qatar National Bank

Mr. Richard Daly,

CEO, Vodafone Qatar

Mr. Hassan Ali Bin Ali,

Chairman, Shafallah Center for Children with Special Needs

Mr. Naim Yazbeck,

Country Manager, Microsoft Qatar

Ms. Howaida Nadim,

Head of Strategic Planning, ictQATAR

 In this fast, ever advancing world of information and communications technology, it is reassuring and heartwarming to know that Mada strives to provide persons with special needs with assistive technology that makes them inclusive in society and active members of the community.

Mr. Ali Bin Ali, Chairman
Shafallah Center for Children with Special Needs

 As Qatar aspires to build a fully connected society, Vodafone is proud to leverage its expertise through our partnership with Mada that is playing a very important role in Qatari society. It is part of our responsibility to contribute by making mobile technology and the power of telecommunications more accessible for everyone.

Mr. Daly
CEO, Vodafone Qatar

 We are trying to help people realize their potential, and by serving as a Mada board member, I feel proud to contribute to improving the lives of disabled people and to help them realize their potential through the use of technology.

Mr. Yazbeck
Country Manager, Microsoft Qatar

Mada would also like to thank the following organizations for working with Mada on building a truly inclusive digital society:

- * ictQATAR
- * Tumuhatec
- * Hukoomi
- * Hamad Medical Corporation
- * Supreme Education Council
- * Qatar University
- * Al Noor Institute for the Blind
- * Al Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs
- * Qatar Social Cultural Club for the Blind
- * Qatar Social Cultural Club for the Deaf
- * Qatar Foundation
- * Qatar Society for Rehabilitation of Persons with Special Needs
- * Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar
- * Carnegie Mellon University in Qatar

Mada 2.0

Connecting with people to communicate, collaborate and share information and ideas is a priority for the team at Mada. Achieving this requires much more than just a website. Mada has been using social media to help achieve its goals throughout the past year.

Through our social networks, we share news, resources, and allow the community in Qatar and beyond to interact with our team of Assistive Technology experts to get the guidance that they need.

Find Mada on the web at:



www.facebook.com/madaqatc



www.twitter.com/madaqatc



www.youtube.com/qatcmada



As Mada (Qatar Assistive Technology Center) enters its third year, it is time to reflect on some of the major achievements of the past twelve months. As a center dedicated to connecting people with disabilities to the world of ICT, we deliver our services through a multi-layered approach. As such, we work in the areas of assessment, training, provision, e-accessibility, research, and outreach.

Mada's vision of a fully accessible digital ecosystem is central to our services, and is reflected in all of our events and outreach activities.

We believe that technology can have a transformative effect on the lives of disabled people, creating opportunities to enhance communication in social, educational and professional settings.

By providing disabled people with the tools and services to access technology, we hope to facilitate independence and self-reliance to enable disabled people to overcome the social and economic barriers they may face.

Providing opportunities for disabled people to access technology is only one half of the Mada story. We believe that to truly achieve digital inclusion, the business, education and wider community in Qatar needs to be aware of their responsibility in ensuring equality of access to technology for people with disabilities.

Their participation is essential to achieving this goal and we have worked with a range of organizations, as well as engaged with the public this year to campaign for awareness and foster positive change.

Being technologically autonomous gives disabled people the ability to overcome some of the many challenges of everyday life. This is what inspires and motivates us at Mada and we hope that as you read about the real life experiences of some of the people we help, you will be similarly inspired.



Imagine moving the circle with your eyes?



لكي تتواصل مع الحياة

Making connections that matter



Mada (Qatar Assistive Technology Center) is a non-profit organization that is empowering and enabling people with disabilities through the greater use of Information and Communication Technologies.
Website: mada.org.qa Tel: 44594050

مدا mada

مركز التكنولوجيا المساعدة قطر "مدي" هو منظمة غير ربحية ملتزم بربط ذوي الإعاقة بتكنولوجيا المعلومات والاتصالات كوسيلة لتعزيز إمكانياتهم وإثراء قدراتهم.
هاتف: ٤٤٥٩٤٠٥٠ الموقع الإلكتروني: mada.org.qa



Every disabled client that comes to Mada is assessed by an assistive technology specialist, to evaluate how their disability affects the way in which they interact with information and communication technology. One-on-one consultations between the client and their technology specialist identify the needs and aspirations of the individual, which form the basis of any recommended solutions by Mada.

A diverse team of assessors allows Mada to meet the preferences of both men and women, and in both the Arabic and English languages.

Experimenting with a choice of appropriate hardware and software adaptations will reveal the most suitable set up to suit the individual's needs. Mada never prescribes, but rather works with the client as well as with family, carers, teachers and other professionals involved, to find the ideal solution.

Core strategic goals

- * Provide assessment for clients to identify technological solutions suited to their individual needs. This may involve integrating a number of assistive technologies and in some cases, conducting joint assessments with other professionals involved with the client, e.g. parents or other carers, may be beneficial.
- * Ensure quality of the assistive technology service provision through the establishment and monitoring of best practice and providing funds according to clear and transparent criteria.

Assessments are the cornerstone of what we do, enabling us to provide our clients with a personalised service. In the last year Mada assessed more than 450 new disabled clients of all ages and with a wide range of disabilities, 50% above projected targets for the year. Depending on the complexity of a person's disability, the assessment process may take place over several sessions. This year we completed over 870 assessment sessions for clients with a variety of physical, sensory and learning disabilities.

A detailed report

Although assessment is a continual process, a comprehensive report is issued to each client, after a comprehensive examination of their needs and abilities. The report will highlight recommended technological solutions and include detailed training and support plans for the successful implementation of the technology.

AT paves way for employment

Mona Jassim is 30 years old and has severe physical impairments that prevent her from using a standard laptop comfortably or productively. The use of a standard keyboard, mouse or touch pad was prohibitively difficult for her.

Her Mada consultant was quick to identify that Mona is very conscious of her appearance and feels more comfortable wearing prosthetic limbs when she is in public. In order to meet her needs both at home and in public, she required two totally separate solutions: one suited to the privacy of her home and another that would allow her to feel physically confident at work and in public. With Mada training, Mona quickly learnt how to use an on-screen keyboard with her foot by means of a joystick that would be

suitable for use at home, and to also use a discreet head tracker when in the office.

With full access to all these new applications and a new-found confidence in her ability to use ICT to full effect, Mona has been able to contemplate employment for the first time. She recently accepted an administrative post in the Ministry of Justice, AlSaad, where her employers have been very supportive. By maintaining a close relationship with Mada, the Ministry has ensured that her workstation incorporates any assistive technology she requires to do her job.

As a result, Mona has a much more fulfilling existence, greater independence and greater self-esteem.

Mada seeks to maintain an on-going relationship with clients to ensure that as their needs and personal circumstances change, we can assess and advise them appropriately.

Working in the community

Over the last year, Mada began delivering assessment services at different locations throughout Qatar. Most notably the Mada team began working with therapists at Hamad Medical Corporation and Rumeila Hospital, both of which are recognised as leading rehabilitation facilities in Qatar.

Through this initiative, children with disabilities who are unable to leave the hospital are able to get connected to the technology they need in a convenient and accessible fashion. Mada also successfully established an assistive technology resource centre at the Hamad Medical Corporation's compound for independent living, enabling Mada staff to work closely with adults with disabilities, and find different ways to incorporate assistive technology into their everyday lives.

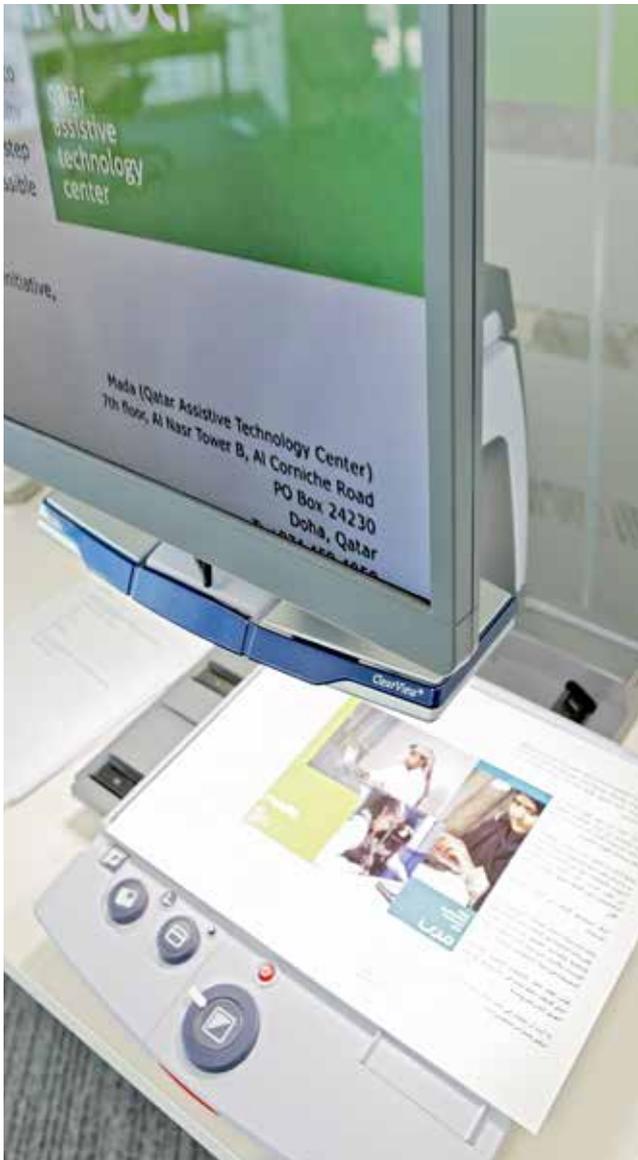
Mada's work with the rehabilitation community in Qatar was publically recognised by the Hamad Medical Corporation's Stars of Excellence Award. Similar external sessions were held on a weekly basis in the Shafallah Centre for Children with Special Needs and the Al-Noor Institute for the Blind.

New Horizons in the Classroom

Nasser is an eight year old blind boy. Before coming to Mada, Nasser had never used a computer and was learning how to read in Braille with a private tutor.

Mada installed a screen reader on a laptop for Nasser with a Braille display. After some basic computer training, he is able to access the internet independently. His new keyboard has also allowed him to improve reading in Braille. Through the greater use of ICT, Nasser will be able to attend a mainstream school and overcome many barriers brought on by his disability. Early intervention and expert AT support will be the key to Nasser's future success.

A Hub of Connectivity



Mada's Resource Center has exceeded all expectations this year and welcomed nearly 800 visitors through its doors, some 60% more than anticipated at the beginning of the year. The resource centre welcomes people with all types of disabilities and is staffed by a team of experts that can address different types of needs and technological aspirations.

Interactive workstations within the Resource Center offer visitors the opportunity to explore a wide range of assistive technologies appropriate to their individual needs. People with visual, hearing, learning and physical disabilities can find suitable adaptations to overcome the difficulties they are presented with when accessing the world of ICT.

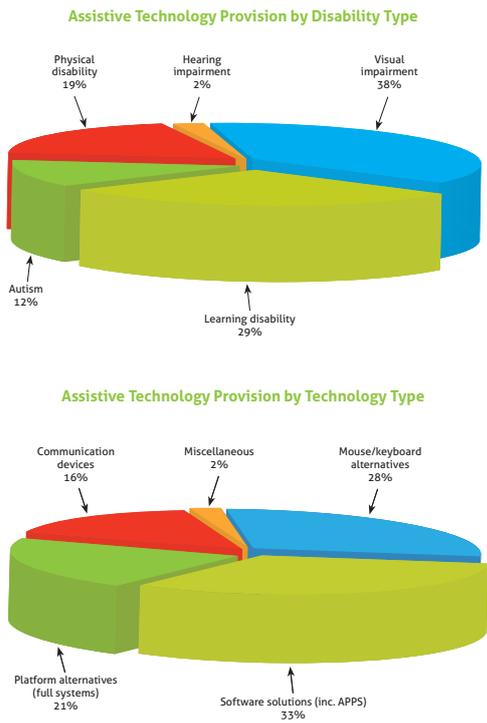
Over the past year, Mada has invested over 3.2 million QAR in making available much needed technology for people with disabilities in Qatar. Citizens and residents of Qatar can access technology through a Universal Assistive Technology Loan Fund. More than 300 clients have taken advantage of the loan program over the past 12 months, by accessing technology on either a short term or long term loan.

In addition, almost 100 people with a disability were also provided with free or open source software solutions and accessible digital resources. These included accessible gaming solutions, a digital version of the Holy Qu'ran designed specifically for the visually impaired, e-book readers, and a variety of online educational software. The resource center continues to establish itself as a regional hub of knowledge and expertise in the area of assistive technology.

Core strategic goals

- * Provide advice by helping individuals choose an assistive technology solution for themselves through the trial of a range of technologies in the resource centre
- * Maintain a rich interactive showcase of ICT assistive technologies to act as hub for awareness and advice; to demonstrate both proven and innovative solutions; to provide a library of information resources including accessible digital content; and construct regular seminar in accessible technology in an accessible environment.
- * Maintain a high quality showcase of assistive technology resources by identifying, procuring and implementing tried and tested technologies from around the world and cutting edge technologies that offer new opportunities to people with disabilities.

In addition to our clients, the center is increasingly being visited by IT, healthcare and education professionals, seeking advice, information and the opportunity to learn about and experience assistive technology choices. The diversity and growth of visitors to the center is a testament to its importance and success.



The Mada Universal Loan Program

As part of its commitment to supporting people with disabilities with their desire to connect to the world of ICT, Mada directly provides a wide range of Assistive Technology solutions. Whether they are placed at home, in school, or at work, these solutions form the cornerstone of Mada’s work with disabled individuals who are unable to use computers or access digital content using conventional methods alone. Through the Universal Loan Program, Mada ensures that all recommended solutions can be provided regardless of financial cost. Through the program, any assistive technology which is recommended by the Mada team is provided to the individual, free of charge, as part of a long term loan. This ensures that the end user is able to test the solution, whilst continuing to receive continuous support from assistive technology specialists at Mada. The Loan Program is only available to eligible candidates who have undergone an assessment at Mada, and have exhibited a need for a particular assistive technology solution.

Providing the Tools for Work



The enabling power of technology is a key driver for the successful integration of disabled people in the workplace. With this in mind, Mada proudly participated in the ‘Virtual Office Environment’ (VOE) initiative which was launched by the Supreme Council for Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR). Through this project, persons with disabilities are able to actively participate in the workplace from home through the use of information and communication technology.

Mada worked closely with different organizations to ensure that disabled employees have the required assistive technology to ensure an accessible working experience.

Within the first year, Mada has facilitated the employment of three disabled people through support and training from our team of assistive technology specialists. Yousef Al Muhanadi, Mada’s Information Officer, is able to work from home when needed as a result of the VOE program.

By taking advantage of an accessible work environment, Yousef is Mada’s voice on the Qatari blogosphere and plays an important role in increasing awareness about Mada’s activities. “I really appreciate having the opportunity to work from home, and through the use of accessible communication solutions, I always feel like I am part of the office environment,” said Yousef about his experience with the VOE.

Building Capacity in Qatar



More than 400 teachers, therapists and web developers attended over 40 courses which were offered for free by Mada in both the Arabic and English languages. Some of the topics covered included using handheld devices, building accessible websites and creating alternative communication grids.

Building local capacities amongst professionals is as an important component of creating an accessible society in Qatar. Throughout the year Mada conducted a series of workshops about different topics relating to assistive technology, with the objective of implementing best practice across a range of related disciplines. At the same time, we have supplied 'hands-on' training to nearly 300 disabled people to whom we have rec-

ommended (and also in some cases supplied through our loan scheme) appropriate assistive technology solutions. Mada has also partnered with Microsoft to facilitate access to a comprehensive and accessible digital literacy curriculum. More than 500 people with disabilities received bilingual copies of the curriculum, as part of Mada's efforts to increase the computing skills of disabled people in Qatar.

Core strategic goals

- * Deliver a comprehensive and targeted ICT literacy outreach, awareness and training plan to enhance the ICT skills of all people with disability, empowering them to participate in Qatar's information society, and educate them on the benefits of ICT in everyday life.
- * Organise and participate more widely in events in Qatar to provide a depth and breadth of information and guidance about assistive technology to stakeholders and members of the public in Qatar



Foundations in Assistive Technology Course

For the very first time in Qatar, an accredited course on assistive technology was made available to people working in the health and education sector. The course was offered by Mada in conjunction with Enable Ireland and the Dublin Institute of Technology, and was completed successfully by 35 professionals. The week long course was conducted twice throughout the year, and required participants to submit a research paper for approval by Enable Ireland and the Dublin Institute of Technology. The course covered a wide range of issues including new technologies, best practices in assessment and the latest trends in accessible gaming.

“Having the opportunity to learn about the fundamentals and best practices of implementing assistive technology solutions will give me the ability to have a greater and better impact on the lives of disabled people in Qatar.

Asha Gopinath, speech therapist at Rumailah Hospital graduated from the course and said,





Over the past year, Mada intensified its activities in the educational sector in Qatar. This is based on the belief that placing assistive technologies in classrooms will break barriers for students with special needs, and will give them the opportunity to prepare themselves for higher education and employment.

By working with the Supreme Education Council, Mada was able to take important steps towards supporting the tremendous work being carried out by teachers and special needs coordinators throughout the Country.

A pilot program with four schools allowed assistive technology specialists from Mada to work directly with students and teachers on different ways that assistive technology can assist in the educational process.

The project took place between October 2011 and March 2012 at Al Hedaya Primary Girls School, Al Qadisiya Model School, Saoud bin Abdulrahman Model School, and the Audio Education Complex. More than 80 students were seen by the Mada Assessment team. The aims of the project were:

Integrating with Schools: Supporting Inclusive Education

Saleh is 18 years old. He has Cerebral Palsy which affected his right arm and leg, which makes it difficult for him to balance well and do tasks that involved coordinating both his hands, such as hold a pen and write.

He was brought to Mada by his teacher who wanted to find out if Saleh could use a computer instead of handwriting. During his assessment at Mada his typing and mouse skills were assessed so that a combination that was suitable for him could be identified.

His Assessor eventually recommended a Mini Keyboard, a Joystick Mouse and software to help

train him in how to use a mouse. His teacher was also given guidelines about ensuring that Saleh kept good posture when using a computer so as to make it easier for him to work at a computer for longer periods.

Saleh continues to be seen regularly at Mada to update the program he is following in school to improve his computer use.

He is now following a set of activities that have been recommended to improve his typing. With the help of the correct keyboard and mouse combination, it is hoped that he should be able to start replacing handwriting with typing over the next few months.

- To raise awareness of the use of assistive technology to support pupils with special and additional needs.

- To estimate the scale of need within schools.

To investigate and suggest a scalable model of assistive technology support that would meet the needs of schools.

- To identify what actions were needed to support the implementation of assistive technologies in schools and classrooms.

- To develop support materials on the implementation of assistive technology in the classroom.

The pilot project also entailed the delivery of extensive training to staff about a variety of topics related to assistive technology. These courses were designed to meet the specific needs of each individual school which were thoroughly analyzed by the Mada team.

The results of the pilot will inform our thinking on how best to serve a larger number of students with special needs, and provide support to the teachers that work with them on a day to day basis.

The Mada outreach team also worked closely with independent schools across the country over the past year. A school awareness program targeted over 20 schools and engaged hundreds of students in an attempt to increase their familiarity with assistive technology and disability in general.

In addition to informative presentations about technology and the disabled, the awareness program also included contests for the best bulletin board and short story. Students from across Qatar created informative boards and wrote short stories so that other students at their school can learn about Mada, and the importance of assistive technologies. The winners were recognized at a ceremony held in the Mada Resource Center.

As a result of the work conducted with the education sector this past year, Mada took an important step forward in facilitating the placement of assistive technologies in classrooms across Qatar.

Supporting Reading and Writing: A Gateway to Achievement

Ahmed was a teenager who came to visit Mada with his father, reporting that he was having difficulties keeping up with work in school and was losing marks in assignments for poor handwriting and spelling. Although Ahmed did not have a formal diagnosis of Dyslexia, he presented with lots of typically associated difficulties such as with spelling, writing and reading.

Over the course of several evaluation sessions, Ahmed was given a chance to try different software options to assist him in writing and to try typing as an alternative to handwriting. He tried a range of "word prediction" software packages, including Co-Writer, with which he could set up specific dictionaries to assist him in spelling more accurately and aid his writing fluency by suggesting words he might use.

A Mada assistive technology specialist also recommended a range of free open source solutions to make it easier for him to use a computer program that enlarges

the cursor on the screen and a software utility named VuBar to highlight and magnify text as he reads it off the computer screen.

Mada also worked directly with Ahmed's teachers to recommend how he could use technology in class to do written work and how they could assist him by providing him with notes and handouts instead of having him copy off the board.

Ahmed is now using his own laptop in class. He has been provided with a copy of Co-Writer as part of Mada's Assistive Technology Universal Loan service and he is using this in conjunction with the free software solutions to complete his written work in school and at home. In feedback to the staff at Mada, Ahmed's father reported that using this technology has made it easier for his son to complete his school work, relieving stress from the family unit.



Mada's involvement in Research and Development is deeply rooted in its commitment to improving the quality and variety of choices available to assistive technology users worldwide. In particular, we are dedicated to supporting the development of assistive technology for Arabic speaking people with disabilities.

Over the past year, Mada has worked with assistive technology developers from around the world to produce Arabic language versions of different types of access technology. By offering logistical and financial support, Mada facilitates the development of these localized products at a time when there are few Arabic language solutions available to digitally excluded individuals.

Core strategic goals

- * **Promote research, development, and production of new kinds of ICT assistive technologies in the area of localisation of resources for people with a disability and promote the translation and localisation of existing resources into Arabic.**
- * **Foster research and development and collaborate with research institutions and the private sector to promote innovation and technological leadership, act as a catalyst in ICT assistive technology research and development for people with disabilities, and launch an innovation challenge to generate new ideas and debate around assistive technology.**

Tried and tested solutions are being translated by Arabic language specialists, and more importantly, tested with Arabic speaking users. As a result, millions of Arabic speakers worldwide now have the potential to access to much needed assistive technologies in their own language.

AT RESEARCH FORUM: A first for Qatar

Building local capacities in the area of assistive technology is important to the establishment of a robust community of scientists and academics committed to developing technologies for disabled people.

As such, Mada hosted its first Qatar AT Research Forum this past year, bringing together representatives from universities, research institutions, and organizations that are working directly with disabled people. The forum is set to be held quarterly and will discuss different ways in which these different sectors of Qatari society can contribute towards developing new and innovative access technologies.

A World of Innovation



FXC Software Series:

The popular collection of ten programs which assists disabled users in different areas of computing such as reading, changing color contrasts, using a mouse, or accessing text to speech has been translated into Arabic, and made available to Arabic speakers for the first time. [add that this set of programs is available for free; can be downloaded from Mada website]



Atbar:

This Mada-funded innovation is an open-source, cross-browser toolbar to help end-users customize the way they view and interact with web pages. The concept behind ATbar is simple: one toolbar to provide all of the functionality you would usually achieve through the use of a variety of different settings or products. ATbar is free, available in most popular browsers and allows you to change the look and feel of web pages, have text read aloud or spell check your work. ATkit enables you to build your own version of ATbar and customize it with the features you want to increase website accessibility and provide a personalized user experience. There's a vast choice of plug-ins to suit every user's needs including zoom, text-to-speech, readability, font changer, and style-sheet changer, amongst others.

Clicker 5

Clicker 5:

Clicker 5: Amongst this year's numerous 'Firsts' is the introduction of 'Clicker 5', a revolutionary new product to the Arab speaking world, which is set to transform the lives of young disabled children. Clicker is a writing support and multimedia tool for children of all abilities. At the top of the screen is a word processor called 'Clicker Writer' and at the bottom of the screen is the 'Clicker Grid'. This way, children can compose sentences independently without physically writing or using the keyboard. Mada is currently training schools and support services throughout Qatar and are confident that 'Clicker 5' will soon be widely available to all pupils who require it.



Saje Technology:

Mada worked closely with Saje Technology, a company that adapts Bluetooth headsets and speaker phones for switch users, to translate their user guides into the Arabic language. By providing information about the product in Arabic, users with physical disabilities can now install and implement this solution with greater ease.

E-books: Access for all



As part of our efforts to provide accessible Arabic digital content, we were pleased to announce the release of 100 new Arabic e-book titles, in partnership with Bookshare, the largest online accessible library of copyrighted content for people with print disabilities. This joint initiative gives Arabic readers with print disabilities the opportunity to read a diverse range of material in the Arabic language.

The collection includes children's books from Scholastic, contemporary books from Arab Scientific Publishers in Lebanon, and literary books from the public domain, in collaboration with Kotobara-bia in Egypt.

Bookshare books are accessible to people who are unable to read standard print books due to blindness, low vision, physical disabilities and severe learning disabilities that affect reading, such as dyslexia. Using computer software, tablet computers, assistive technology devices, phones, and MP3 players, Bookshare members can listen to books with high quality text-to-speech voices, read books in digital Braille, or magnify and highlight words as needed. The launch of the Arabic-language collection gives people with print disabilities in the Arab-speaking world the opportunity to read for school, work, or leisure and to participate more fully in society.

Building an accessible digital landscape

Access to the world of ICT for people with disabilities is only possible with the prevalence of accessible digital content. In particular, users of Assistive Technology require content to be designed and presented according to international standards of e-accessibility so they can navigate through with ease. These standards apply to websites, applications for mobile devices, online audio and video material, and even Automated Teller Machines (ATM).

For example, websites should be designed in a way that allows them to be navigable by keyboard alone, allowing users who cannot use a mouse to access the site. For visitors with visual impairments, text and

images must be laid out and labeled in a manner that make them easy to understand by someone using a screen reader or a Braille output device. As more and more digital platforms emerge, the need to ensure accessibility becomes more critical.

These efforts come as part of a nationwide initiative to build an accessible digital ecosystem as prescribed in the National e-Accessibility Policy, launched by The Supreme Council for Information and Communication Technology (ictQATAR) earlier in the year. To support this initiative, Mada now offers a wide range of e-accessibility services which include reviews and extensive audits, training and technical support.

This past year Mada launched the National Website Accreditation Program, a unique and valued way to demonstrate an organization's forward-thinking approach to barrier-free web design. After undergoing a Mada website accessibility audit review, staff training and satisfactory compliance to recommendations, organizations will receive an accreditation badge from Mada to be placed on their website.

Level 1 – Access Planning



A badge is awarded to an organization which agrees to implement an action plan to increase the accessibility of their website based on audit reviews, staff training, and the implementation of policy and processes.

Level 2 – Access Certified



This level of recognition goes to websites that achieve standards outlined in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 priority level A and AA. The website and its accreditation are renewed annually following review and validation.

Level 3 – Access Award



The highest level of accreditation is awarded to websites that demonstrate accessibility in a fashion that goes beyond the standards outlined in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 priority level AA. In such instances, websites feature innovate solutions in the areas of user functionality.

Qtel gets on board with accessibility

Telecoms giant, Qtel, takes its commitment to accessibility extremely seriously. Not satisfied with a mere pledge to comply with international guidelines, Qtel has taken some major steps to making its intentions a reality across the organization.

Qtel has already begun to change company culture around accessibility and associated issues. By asking Mada to conduct a comprehensive audit of its website, followed by practical workshops attended by staff from both Qtel and their web development consultants, and they are now fully focused on turning theory into practice.

With Mada’s 1st level Web Accreditation (Access Planning) in place and equipped with a workable timeframe in which to deliver its objectives, Qtel has agreed to comply with the accessibility global ‘gold standard’ - WCAG 2.0 AA.

And what is so pivotal about Qtel’s participation in the drive towards accessibility and digital inclusion? As Qatar’s market-leading telecoms provider, Qtel realizes that it has a strategic responsibility in terms of establishing best practice standards on an international platform and setting an example for others to follow. As such, it has a vital role to play in ensuring that all public facing digital content is fully accessible. The future is bright for the Mada - Qtel partnership, with plans in place to review developments on an on-going basis. Says Mada CEO, David Banes: “Accessibility is never ‘complete’. It is a dynamic process, which has to be checked and monitored regularly.

Nobody recognizes this more than Qtel and we are look forward to assisting them along the accreditation pathway and are confident that their example will inspire other organizations to do the same.

An accessible e-government in Qatar

This past year, the Qatari electronic government portal (Hukoomi) was recognized for excellence in the area of e-accessibility. An extensive review by the e-accessibility team at Mada (Qatar Assistive Technology Center) discovered that the Hukoomi website met international standards for e-accessibility. Mada presented Hukoomi with the “Access Certified” badge as part of the Center’s National Web Accreditation Program. This made the Hukoomi portal the first website to achieve this level of recognition in Qatar, and made it a regional leader in this field.

“ictQATAR is committed to making information and communication technology in Qatar more accessible to people with disabilities. Accessibility has been a major priority for us throughout the development of Hukoomi, and as the site evolves to include more information and e-services we will continue to ensure it meets essential

standard spelled out in Qatar’s National e-Accessibility Policy. We encourage entities across the country to adopt this policy to make their ICT offerings more accessible and we are grateful to Mada for their tireless efforts in bringing the full benefits of technology to people with disabilities in Qatar,” said Hassan El-Sayed, ictQATAR Assistant Secretary General, Information Technology Sector and ICT Government Programs.

The level of accessibility reached by Hukoomi is a strong indicator of the commitment made by the Supreme Council of Information and Communication (ictQATAR) in the area of e-accessibility, having launched the National e-Accessibility Policy which is aimed at ensuring that public sector websites, public telephones, and even Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) meet international accessibility standards for persons with disabilities.

If a digitally connected Qatar is our vision, then outreach and communication are a prerequisite for the fully inclusive future to which we aspire. With this in mind, we have worked hard over the past twelve months to spread the word via face-to-face contact, social media, outreach collateral and a host of other exciting and dynamic channels.

Mada Engages the Wider Community

One of the core aims of Mada is to raise awareness about the importance of assistive technology in improving the lives of disabled people in Qatar. Throughout the year, the Mada team organizes and takes part in a series of events aimed at engaging the wider community about issues of accessibility and technology.

Ramadan Events

During the Holy Month of Ramadan Mada held a series of celebratory events within the disabled community throughout Qatar. Last year Mada hosted an Iftar meal at the Qatar Social and Cultural Club for the Blind in which accessible versions of the Holy Qu'ran were distributed to attendees. Later on in the month Mada celebrated Garangao, a local Ramadan tradition during which children visit the homes of their neighbors, who distribute sweets and nuts to them. For its part, Mada gave out gift bags to disabled children throughout the country.

QitCom

Mada participated for the second year in a row in Qatar's leading IT exhibition and conference, which is organized annually by the Supreme Council of Information and Communication Technology (ictQatar). In addition to exhibiting an interactive showcase of assistive technologies, Mada organized a conference session about e-accessibility.

Summer Kid's Programme

Disabled children from across Qatar visited the Resource Center for week long programme of technology based activities during the summer. They were able to experience accessible games, resources and equipment first hand in a fun and interactive environment.

GCC E-Government Expo

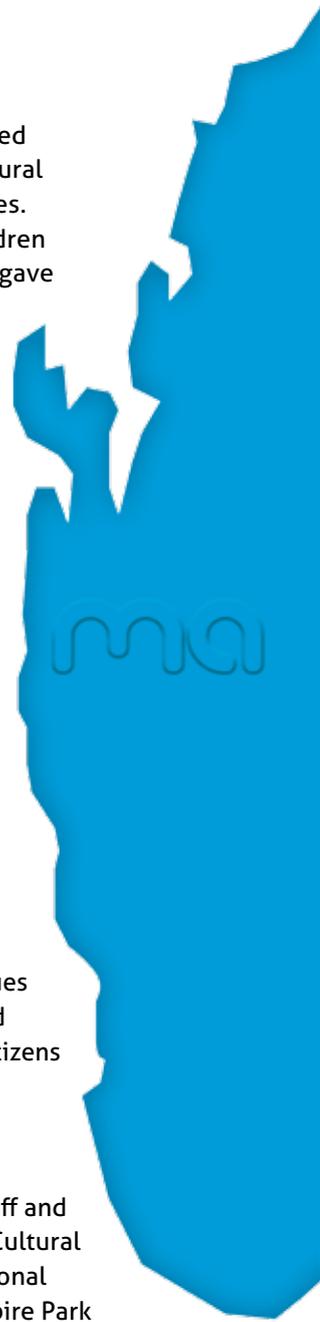
Increasingly, governments in the Gulf region are keen to ensure that their electronic services are accessible to people with disabilities. Last year, representatives from e-governments from throughout the GCC met in Kuwait to discuss a variety of issues related to providing effective and relevant electronic services to citizens in their respective countries.

White Cane Day

The Mada team partnered with staff and members of the Qatar Social and Cultural Club for the Blind during international White Cane Day, at an event in Aspire Park to highlight the use of technology by the blind community in Qatar.

Core strategic goals

- * Maintain a nationwide and regional campaign that will focus on the potential of people with disabilities, and the ways in which Assistive Technologies acts as a tool of empowerment.
- * Create awareness of the ways in which assistive technologies can benefit certain people in society and improve social welfare in Qatar.



GCC Disability Forum

Every year Mada participates in the annual GCC Disability Forum that is held in countries throughout the region. In Qatar, last year's two day event focused on the issue of employing people with disabilities. Mada chaired a session at which it presented different ways in which assistive technology can support disabled employees by creating accessible work spaces.

Accessible Gaming Night

Mada's Resource Center hosted an evening event at the Center dedicated to demonstrating computer games and activities for people who are blind or have low vision. The event saw many young people with a visual impairment come to the Center to play games and experience new technologies with their friends.

AT Seminar: Technology and Employment for the Disabled

As part of a series of seminars on assistive technology, Mada hosted a one day conference to discuss the ways in which technology can facilitate greater employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Local experts, in the field of employing people with disabilities, as well as speakers from India, Singapore and the USA, shared best practices in the field. At the event, Mada presented its employment guide to potential employers in Qatar that are interested in creating accessible workspaces.

International Autism Day

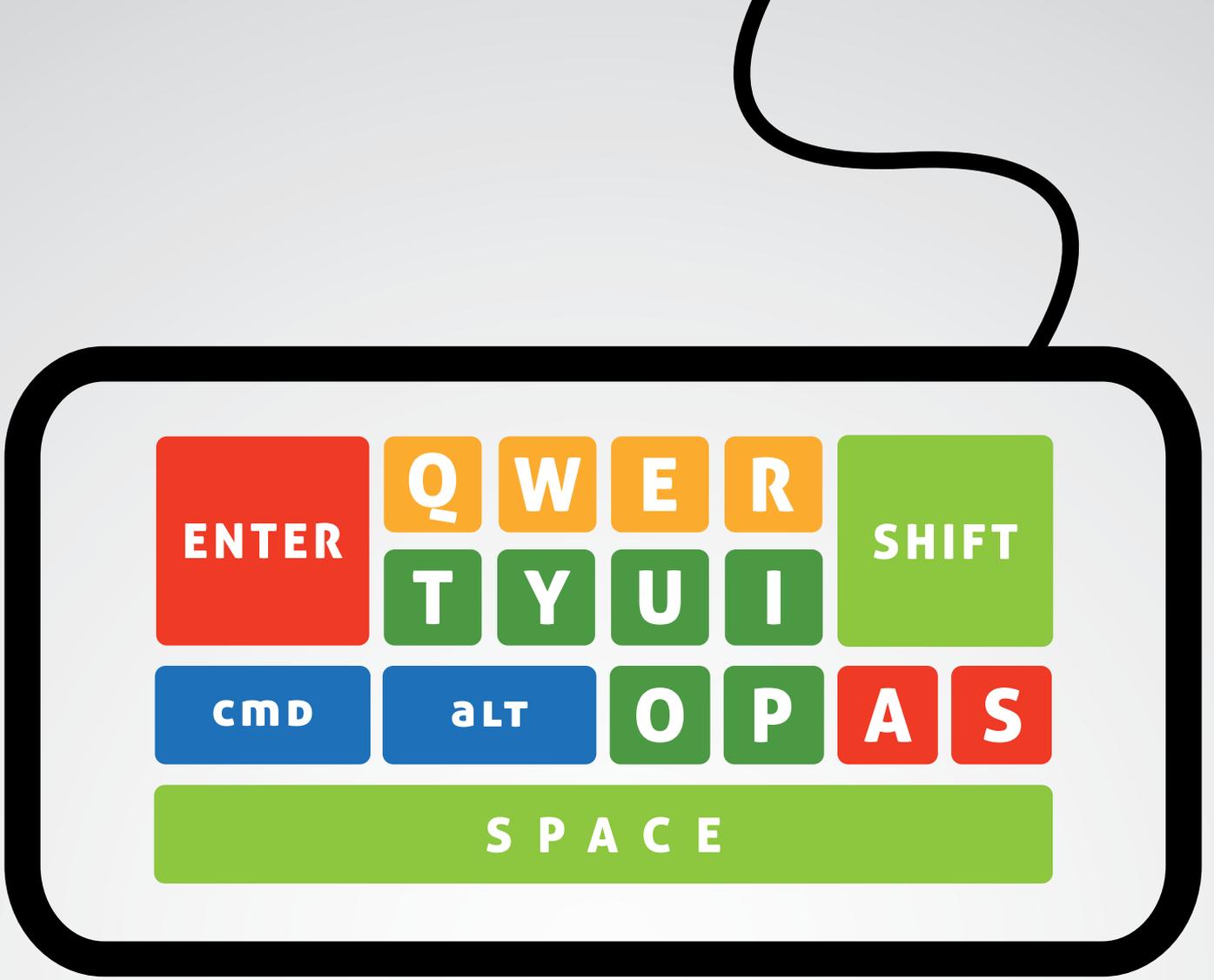
To mark International Autism Day, Mada held a community discussion to explore the different ways in which assistive technology can benefit people with autism. This formed part of a series of nationwide activities aimed at raising awareness about autism and how technology can support the learning, communication and social needs of people with autism. Mada staff presented a series of short lectures during the day to provide more information to people on what Autistic Spectrum Disorder is and the impact it has on affected individuals and their families. The Resource Center also distributed factsheets on autism and technology through ictQATAR and to partner organizations.

ITU Geneva

The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) is the United Nations body responsible for all matters relating to communications and technology. During the month of October ITU held a summit at which industry and government leaders congregated in Geneva, where major issues impacting the way in which we communicate were discussed. For its part Mada highlighted the importance of creating telecoms infrastructures that are accessible to people with disabilities.

Regional Meeting of Rehabilitation International

Mada sponsored the annual Arab regional meeting of Rehabilitation International, a global organization that brings together occupational and physical therapists to discuss emerging trends in the field of rehabilitation.



لكي تتواصل مع الحياة

Making connections that matter 



Mada (Qatar Assistive Technology Center) is a non-profit organization that is empowering and enabling people with disabilities through the greater use of Information and Communication Technologies.
Website: mada.org.qa Tel: 44594050

مدا mada

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