



Accessible is Good, Inclusive is Better!

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In this session ..

- ▶ The topic of Social Inclusion within museums
- ▶ Stages of initiating Accessibility Service & Programmes in Sharjah Museums
- ▶ Needs analysis of individuals with disabilities
- ▶ Accessible services
- ▶ Accessible programmes
- ▶ Challenges and areas of improvements
- ▶ Questions/ Discussion



Introduction to Sharjah

- ▶ 3rd largest city in the United Arab Emirates
- ▶ Ruler: His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi, Ruler of Sharjah and Member of the Supreme Council
- ▶ Strong cultural identity and history
 - ▶ ‘Cultural Capital of the Arab World’ title by UNESCO, in 1998
 - ▶ Named the “Islamic Culture Capital” in 2014.



Introduction to Sharjah Museums Department

- ▶ Established in 2006
- ▶ Includes 16 museums of different themes
- ▶ Purpose: deliver the highest museum standards to preserve collections & enhance an appreciation of culture and learning through our exhibitions, educational and community programmes.



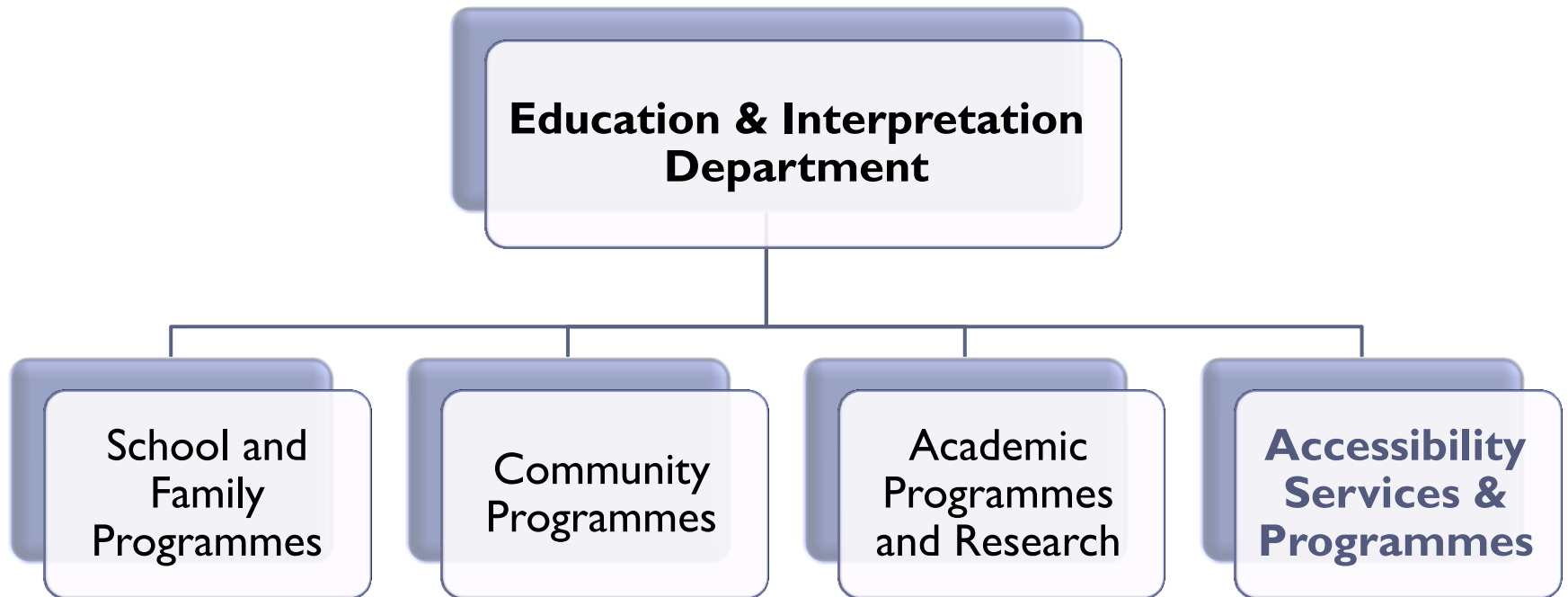
Social Inclusion

- ▶ Social inclusion of people with disabilities has emerged as a key concept within human services in the last decade
- ▶ "to promote the involvement in culture and leisure activities of those at risk of social disadvantage or marginalisation, particularly by virtue of the area they live in; their disability, poverty, age, racial or ethnic origin." 1



▶ *(Department for Culture, Media and Sport; 2000)*

Initiating the Accessibility Division



Accessibility Services and Programmes Division

- ▶ Established in 2008
- ▶ Ultimate goal: make Sharjah museums **ACCESSIBLE** for **ALL**
- ▶ Zero audience!
- ▶ Dramatic shift to create an accessible environment:

Space

public visitors

Staff

Timings of visits



Steps of initiating Accessibility Service & Programmes

1. Observational visits
2. Assessing audience' needs
3. Evaluating museums physical environment
4. Enhancing the museums physical environment
5. Providing accessible services
6. Training museums' staff
7. Providing accessible programmes and workshops



Phase 1: Observational visits

- ▶ Centers of disabilities and community centers
 - ▶ orphans, elder centers, juvenile, centers for protection of women and children, ... etc.
- Outreach focused on Sharjah
- Getting closer to audience, gain their trust
- Time consuming → almost a year



Phase 2: Assessing audience' needs

- ▶ Gathered information, data on basic required needs
- ▶ Interviews with concerned centers & individuals
- ▶ Provide “Standards”: the accepted levels of attainment that we are expected to achieve



Phase 3: Evaluating the museums' physical environment

- ▶ Thorough evaluation of 16 museums
 - ▶ physical environment & facilities
- Every detail was taken into account
- How to adapt changes according to the needs of each disability/ category?



Phase 4: Enhancing the museums' physical environment

- ▶ Changes and enhancements according to:

- ▶ Audience' needs
- ▶ Project Department
- ▶ Concepts of “Universal Design”



- ▶ It targets design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design
- ▶ Main goal: serving ALL people



Continued..

Phase 4: Enhancing the museums' physical environment

- ▶ Excellent source of information
 - ▶ Parking
 - ▶ Ramps
 - ▶ Elevators
 - ▶ Doors

And much more!



Design for Accessibility
A Cultural Administrator's Handbook



Number of Parking Spaces

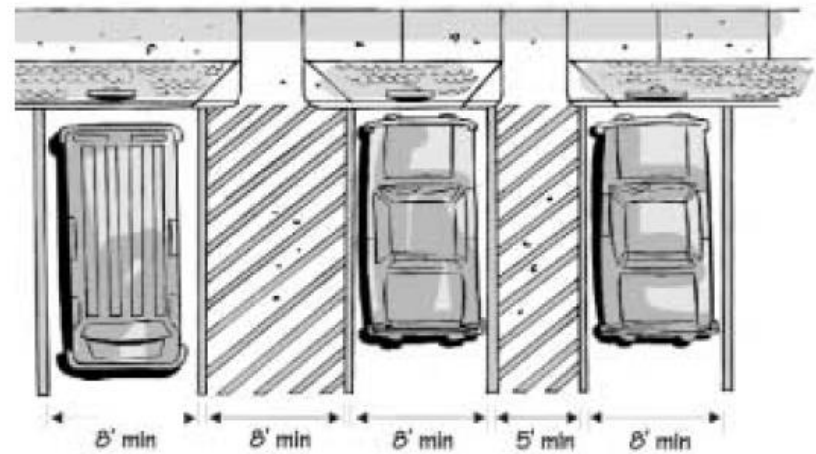
Total parking space	Minimum # of Accessible Spaces Required
1 to 25	1
26 to 50	2
51 to 75	3
76 to 100	4
101 to 150	5
151 to 200	6
201 to 300	7
501 to 1000	2% of total

(The Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines “ADAAG” and the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards “UFAS”)



Location & measurements of the parking spaces

- ▶ Location: No more than 50 m from a main building entrance
- ▶ Measurements: minimum width of 8 feet with a 5-foot access aisle for wheelchair transfers



Accessible Parking Spaces with Accessible Aisles





**Parking spaces at
Sharjah Aquarium**



Doorways and Ramps

Doorways

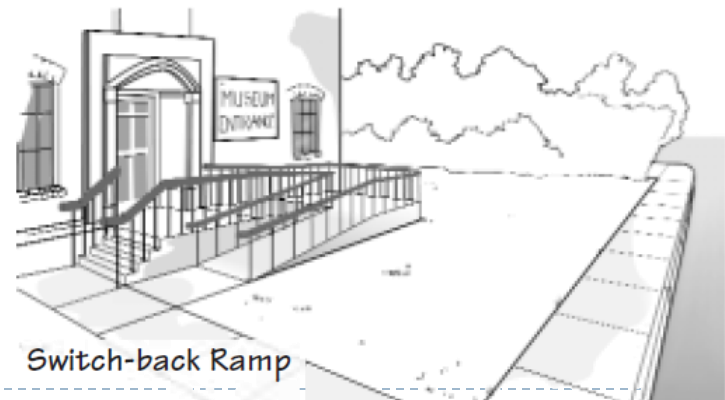
- ▶ Must provide a minimum of 32 inches of clearance when the door is standing open at 90 degrees.



▶ 32" Minimum Clear Width Door

Ramps

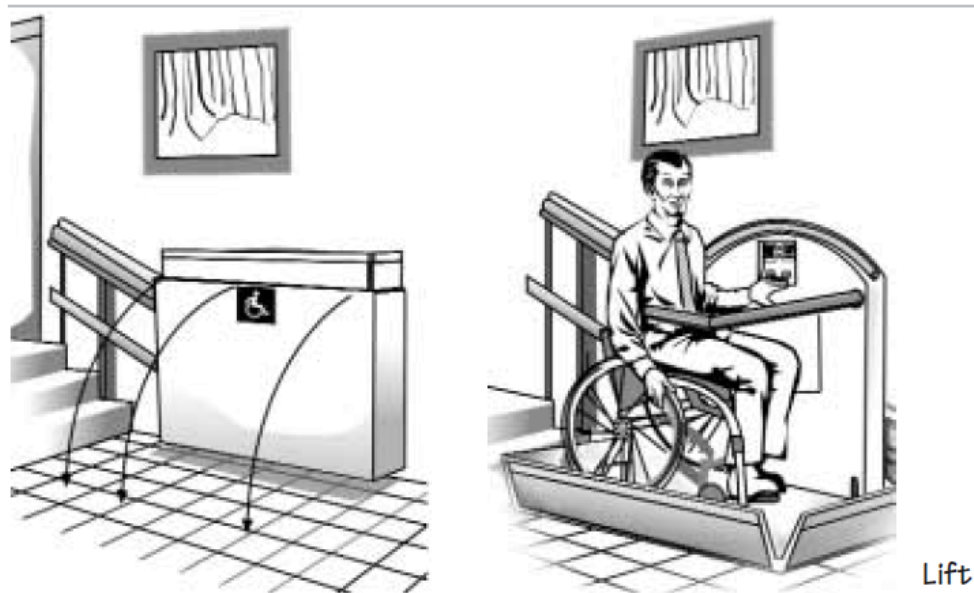
- ▶ Not too steep
- ▶ Minimum slope of 1:20
- ▶ Greater than 1:12 is considered a hazard
- ▶ Width: minimum is 1 m



Switch-back Ramp

Wheelchair lifts

- ▶ Mostly last-resort solution
- ▶ Should only be installed if there is not enough room for a ramp or another possible solution is not available

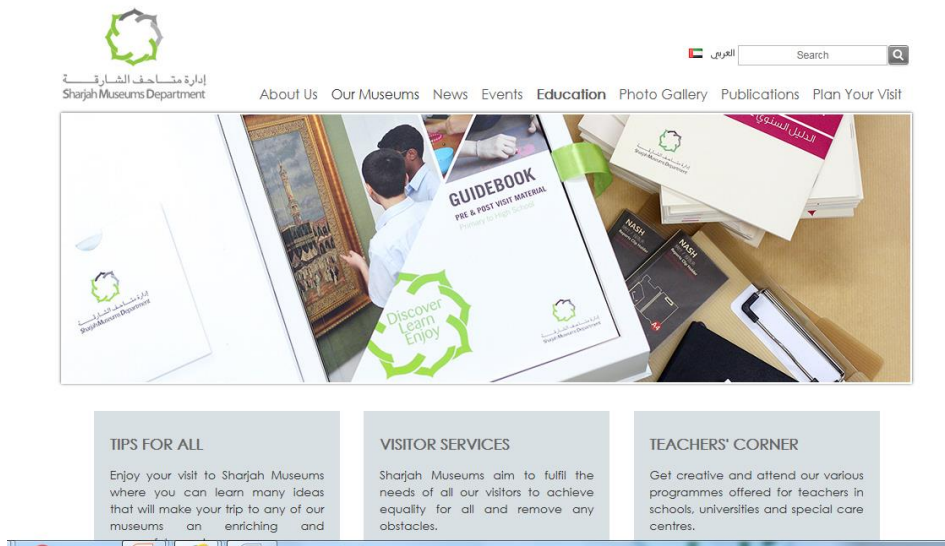


Wheelchair lift in Sharjah Aquarium



Phase 5: Providing accessible services

- ▶ Audio guides for visitors with hearing disabilities
- ▶ Braille and Large Print publication for visitors with visual disabilities
- ▶ Challenge → **enhancing existing museums!**
- ▶ After evaluation → **providing “Physical Access Reports”**

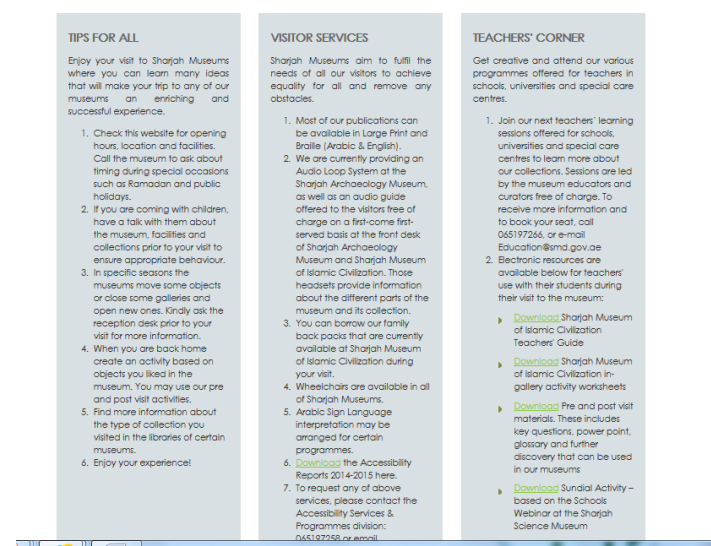


The screenshot shows the Sharjah Museums Department website. At the top, there is a logo and navigation menu including 'About Us', 'Our Museums', 'News', 'Events', 'Education', 'Photo Gallery', 'Publications', and 'Plan Your Visit'. A search bar is also present. The main content area features a large image of a 'GUIDEBOOK PRE & POST VISIT MATERIAL Primary Education School' with a 'Discover Learn Enjoy' logo. Below this, there are three columns of text:

TIPS FOR ALL
Enjoy your visit to Sharjah Museums where you can learn many ideas that will make your trip to any of our museums an enriching and

VISITOR SERVICES
Sharjah Museums aim to fulfill the needs of all our visitors to achieve equality for all and remove any obstacles.

TEACHERS' CORNER
Get creative and attend our various programmes offered for teachers in schools, universities and special care centres.



This section provides detailed information about accessibility services. It includes three main categories:

TIPS FOR ALL
Enjoy your visit to Sharjah Museums where you can learn many ideas that will make your trip to any of our museums an enriching and successful experience.

1. Check this website for opening hours, location and facilities. Call the museum to ask about timing during special occasions such as Ramadan and public holidays.
2. If you are coming with children, have a talk with them about the museum, facilities and collections prior to your visit to ensure appropriate behaviour.
3. In specific seasons the museums move some objects or close some galleries and open new ones. Kindly ask the reception desk prior to your visit for more information.
4. When you are back home create an activity based on objects you liked in the museum. You may use our pre and post visit activities.
5. Find more information about the type of collection you visited in the libraries of certain museums.
6. Enjoy your experience!

VISITOR SERVICES
Sharjah Museums aim to fulfil the needs of all our visitors to achieve equality for all and remove any obstacles.

1. Most of our publications can be available in Large Print and Braille (Arabic & English).
2. We are currently providing an Audio Loop System at the Sharjah Archaeology Museum, as well as an audio guide offered to the visitors free of charge on a first-come first-served basis at the front desk of Sharjah Archaeology Museum and Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization. Those headsets provide information about the different parts of the museum and its collection.
3. You can borrow our family book packs that are currently available at Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization during your visit.
4. Wheelchairs are available in all of Sharjah Museums.
5. Arabic Sign Language interpretation may be arranged for certain programmes.
6. [Download](#) the Accessibility Reports 2014-2015 here.
7. To request any of above services, please contact the Accessibility Services & Programmes division: 065132250, or email: 065132250@smc.ae

TEACHERS' CORNER
Get creative and attend our various programmes offered for teachers in schools, universities and special care centres.

1. Join our next teachers' learning sessions offered for schools, universities and special care centres to learn more about our collections. Sessions are led by the museum educators and curators free of charge. To receive more information and to book your seat, call 065197266, or e-mail Education@smc.gov.ae
2. Electronic resources are available below for teachers' use with their students during their visit to the museum:
 - ▶ [Download](#) Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization Teachers' Guide
 - ▶ [Download](#) Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization In-gallery activity worksheets
 - ▶ [Download](#) Pre and post visit materials. These include key questions, power point, glossary and further discovery that can be used in our museums
 - ▶ [Download](#) Sundial Activity - based on the Schools Webinar at the Sharjah Science Museum

Physical Access Reports

- ▶ Reports on services and facilities of 16 museums
- ▶ Updated regularly
- ▶ Found in: www.sharjahmuseums.ae
- ▶ Transparency and truth are key
 - ▶ Old historic buildings are NOT fully accessible



Phase 6: Training museums' staff

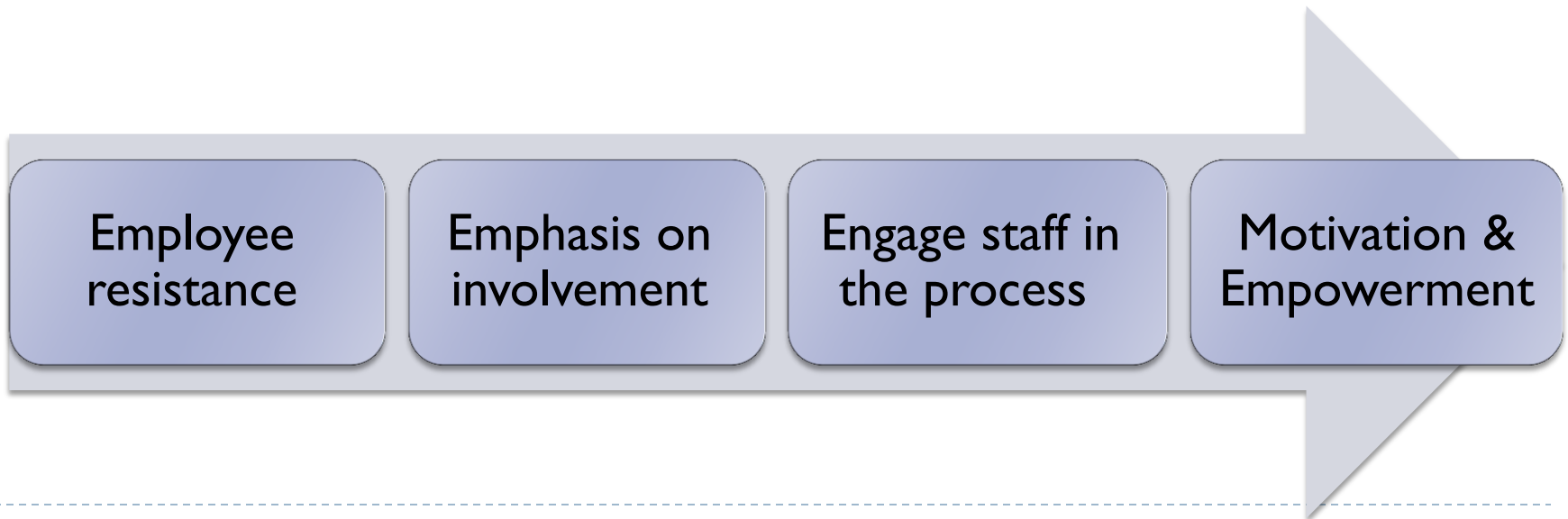
- ▶ Making PEOPLE within museums accessible
 - ▶ receptionists, guides, curators and education specialists
- ▶ First impression lasts forever!
- ▶ Continuous training for the new employees and other employees as well

"The Art of Dealing with Different Disabilities"



The Art of Dealing with Different Disabilities (ADDD)

- ▶ Overview of our section and our target group
- ▶ How to host them
- ▶ What's appropriate and what's not
- ▶ Tips and etiquettes with practical activities



ADDD: Using the appropriate terminologies

- ▶ "disability" vs. "special needs"
- ▶ Which one is the correct terminology?



Dos and Don'ts !

Don't	Do
The handicapped The impaired The disabled The unfortunate	People with disabilities A disability
A blind person (never use a disability as an adjective)	A person who is blind A person who is partially sighted or has low vision (focus on the person, not the disability)
The deaf Suffers a hearing loss ("Suffers" dramatizes a disability)	Person who is deaf Person who is hard-of-hearing
Wheelchair bound Confined or restricted to a wheelchair	Person who uses a wheelchair Person with limited mobility
The retarded	Person with mental retardation
The learning disabled	Person with learning disabilities

Dividing the categories of our audience

- ▶ Previous division of categories: physical, hearing, mental, and visual disabilities
- ▶ Current division of categories (agreed by latest literature)²:
 1. Communication and interaction; (e.g. deaf, blind, non-verbal, speech impediment)
 2. Cognition and learning; (e.g. dyslexia, autism spectrum disorder)
 3. Social, emotional and mental health; (e.g. depression, attention deficit disorder (ADD), or anxiety disorders)
 4. Sensory and/or physical needs; (e.g. wheelchair users, down syndrome)

Hearing Disability

- ▶ Have several degrees (hard-of-hearing & deafness)
 - ▶ appropriate tools to be used
- ▶ Arabic Sign Language training course
- ▶ **Practical Activity!**



Training for Arabic Sign Language



Wheelchair Users

- ▶ Emphasis on importance of wheelchair to the visitor
- ▶ Staff must check the condition & location of the wheelchairs within museums



Visual Disability

- ▶ Publications in Braille & Large print
- ▶ Touch pool “marine animals”
- ▶ **Challenge → drop in number of visits**
 - ▶ Touch tours
 - ▶ Replicas of masterpieces “touchable objects”



Touch tours in Sharjah Museums



Touch tours in Sharjah Museums



Touchable objects in Sharjah Museums



Touch tours ..



Visitors with socio-emotional problems

- ▶ Staff must be assertive
- ▶ Staff used to confuse this kind of visitors with mentally disabled individuals
 - ▶ Training increases awareness



The Juveniles

- ▶ Internal “inside the center” & external educational programmes “within museums”
- ▶ Identities must remain confidential
- ▶ Part of social rehabilitation program, in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Interior



Phase 7: Providing accessible programmes and workshops

- ▶ Research results: urgent need of social activities for people with disabilities & marginalised groups
- ▶ Common issue with centers and families
- ▶ After training, a series of permanent accessible programmes was created
 - ▶ Special care centers
 - ▶ Families



Accessible educational programmes & workshops

Special Care Centers

- ▶ Launched in 2010
- ▶ Weekly basis
- ▶ Requires prior booking
- ▶ Free of charge
- ▶ Maximum number of 15 participants “visual disability & autism 7”

Families

- ▶ Launched in 2012
- ▶ Monthly basis
- ▶ Requires prior booking
- ▶ Free of charge
- ▶ Maximum number of 25 participants



Challenges in educational programmes

- ▶ Number of objects being taught
- ▶ Timings of workshops
- ▶ Increased number of participants in educational workshops & programmes
 - ▶ Requires more resources, more staff
- ▶ Still low number of visits from Emiratis
 - ▶ Cultural difference



The challenge with autism

- ▶ Drop in number of visits of families who have children with autism
- ▶ Focus groups, interviews to underlie reasons and come up with solutions
 - ▶ Quite corners within museum's galleries
 - ▶ Less verbal communication
 - ▶ More visual aids → visual cards



Exceeding visitor's expectations

- ▶ Continuous evaluations & feedback from audience
- ▶ Introduced “Loyalty Card for Friends of Sharjah Museums”
 - ▶ range of privileges inside & outside of museums
 - ▶ helped in increasing museums visits
- ▶ Training individuals with disabilities & future job opportunities



What's next?

- ▶ Continuous CHANGE
- ▶ Training and benchmarking
- ▶ Visits to other museums and institutes, locally and internationally
 - ▶ Learn new practices & approaches
 - ▶ Meet new people



Standards vs. Best Practices

- ▶ Started with acceptable standards



- ▶ Best Practices: commendable actions & philosophies demonstrating awareness of standards, solve problems, can be replicated and that museums may choose to emulate if appropriate to their circumstances



Continued ..

Standards vs. Best Practices

- ▶ Competition is fierce for disability-friendly environments
- ▶ Accessibility is a necessity, NOT a trend
- ▶ One of the basic rights



Accessibility is all about enabling individuals

- ▶ Accessibility is not show and tell
- ▶ Spread an awareness, change stereotypes, deliver a message

They are really talented !
They have great potentials !
They are definitely able !



Summary

- ▶ Social inclusion is reflected in the opportunities, services, and attitudes
- ▶ opportunities in education, employment, recreational activities, and leisure activities
- ▶ Social inclusion enhances quality of life

We want to make a difference in the society!



References

- ▶ Dodd, J., Sandell, R., Jolly, D., & Jones, C. (2008). UK: RCMG University Of Leicester.
- ▶ Gioia, D., Cole, B., Katz, J., & Gordon, D. E. (1994). Washington: National Assembly of State Arts Agencies.
- ▶ Simon, N. (2010). *The participatory museum*. Santa Cruz, CA: Museum 2.0.
- ▶ Starwell, M. (1992). Washington: The American Association of Museums.



Questions?

Thank you ..