Across the globe, persons with disabilities are often excluded from societal mainstream. Governments across the world are increasingly enacting laws aimed at protecting the basic freedoms and dignities of persons with disabilities. Federal Law No. 29 of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is one such law. This law illuminates the challenges of implementing international human rights norms on the local level. The talk illustrates the degree of success the Government of the UAE and particularly the local government of the Emirate of Dubai has had in implementing Federal Law 29 of 2006. My research advances dominant approaches in planning, policy and design in three ways. First, I characterize disability as a fundamental failure between an agent and his or her physical, social, and institutional environment along some dimension instead of being a deviation from the norm of human functioning. Second, I introduce the concept of salience to measure local attitudes toward persons with disabilities relative to international norms. Finally, I offer practitioners a policy-intervention framework along two dimensions, basic functioning and basic freedoms. Empirical findings can be used to strengthen evidence-based advocacy, building frameworks for equality and elevating the voices of the most marginalized.