

.....Overseas Partner Fact Sheet.....

Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation

How it all started

The Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation (BASR) began as a Cheshire Home. It was started in an old house in Bethlehem with a few physically disabled children. The Bethlehem Arab Society took over in 1975 and the work grew until, in 1990, the Society was able to purchase land in Beit Jala, on the outskirts of Bethlehem, and erect a purpose-built centre. BASR now serves many thousands of people each year through its various activities both at its main premises in Bethlehem and through its growing number of community outreach projects in the local area.

BASR offers specialised rehabilitation, medical and surgical services. From its small beginnings it has grown to become a referral unit and resource centre of excellence recognised throughout the West Bank. According to Director Edmund Shehadeh, the centre is run on the basis of a "human rights approach to disability", and seeks "through its work and partnership with national and international communities to make a difference to one of the most troubled areas in the world." This is well illustrated by the sculpture which stands outside the centre's main entrance, boldly declaring to all who arrive that 'EVERY PATIENT IS FIRST & FOREMOST A HUMAN BEING.'



Left: Abdallah received several months' rehabilitation at BASR, after which he became well enough to return home to his family

As the centre concentrates on early intervention, most of the children who stay there are very young. Because of this, their mothers usually spend a lot of time at the centre with them. This also means that the mothers can learn how to continue to care for their children's needs when they return home.

The Palestinian Authority does not run any rehabilitation hospitals, so it is up to non-governmental organisations (NGOs), such as BASR, to provide this service to the Palestinians.

Through all its work, the centre aims to provide holistic care, offering rehabilitation at the centre, home-based rehabilitation programmes and community day-care centres. It is nationally recognised for the medical and rehabilitation services it provides people from across Palestine.

Key facts

Founded: 1960
 Location: Bethlehem, West Bank
 First Grant from BibleLands: 1983
 BibleLands' Grant: £15,000 p.a.

Current Activities

BASR provides high quality care for its patients both during and after their treatment at the centre. The centre has physiotherapy, speech & language therapy and occupational therapy departments, it also offers counselling and advisory services. The centre does not just work with children but provides all these services and more to older disabled people, including vocational training and a workshop as part of its rehabilitative services.

As well as giving good medical care, BASR gives school lessons to the children during their time at the centre.

The centre has a very busy out-patients department, with physiotherapy, a hydrotherapy pool and an orthopaedic workshop. They also run a psycho-social intervention programme to promote well being.



Following a gunshot wound to his head, Amjad was in a coma for 2 months. After this he came to BASR. He could not speak, hear or eat, but gradually began to recover. After several months of intensive care at BASR, he was able to return home.

In recent years BASR has set up Outreach Centres in nearby towns and villages, where visiting physiotherapists and rehabilitation workers help parents to care for their disabled children. This allows the children to continue to progress at home, and integrate with their community.

From time to time disabled children who also have sight problems are transferred between the Helen Keller Centre (another of BibleLands' Overseas Partners, in Jerusalem) and BASR. One of the physiotherapy aides at BASR is a blind woman who was educated at the Helen Keller Centre.

Many of the workers at BASR are themselves disabled and thus are a good role model to the children, proving that disability need not mean a lifetime of dependence.

The Society's work has enhanced the overall quality of life for hundreds of disabled children and their families, helping them to integrate into society, to be independent and to live with respect and dignity. The alternative for these children would be a severely limited existence shut away from the world, and with little hope for their parents.

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