

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

Princess Basma Centre

How it all started

The Princess Basma Centre for Disabled Children began as a home for physically disabled children, primarily those with polio and paralysis. It was founded in 1965, under the patronage of Princess Basma, the sister of King Hussein of Jordan, at a time when there was a great need for services to disabled children but few organisations to offer this care.

The centre has since become a National Resource and Referral Centre for disabled children from all over the West Bank.

Key facts

Founded: 1965

Location: Mount of Olives,
Jerusalem

First Grant from BibleLands: 1980

BibleLands' Grant: £21,000 p.a.



Above: The centre's staff create an individual programme of rehabilitation for each child, teaching mothers how to implement it, so that the programme will continue when they return home.

Current Activities

Around 30 children with a physical disability can stay at the centre at any one time, to receive its rehabilitation services. Whilst children up to the age of 15 years are treated, early intervention is important, so many of the children are younger and their mothers stay at the centre with them.

The centre's comprehensive services include physiotherapy, play therapy and occupational therapy, as well as hydrotherapy and special education. An orthopaedic doctor holds a clinic at the centre once a week and refers those children who need orthopaedic operations to local hospitals in Jerusalem or Bethlehem. A mobile dental unit and the St. John Eye Hospital (another of BibleLands' Overseas Partners) provide free dental checks and eye tests.

The centre's focus is on Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), integrating each child into their community, and the centre is one of the 3 National Referral Centres for CBR in Palestine. Children come to the centre for between 1 – 3 months for professional assessment and to receive an individual rehabilitation programme, but the majority of their rehabilitation is carried out at home. Over 200 families receive training in how to care for their disabled children every year.

More than 200 children come to the centre each year, many of whom are referred from other hospitals across Jerusalem and the West Bank. A few families pay nominal fees whilst others are refugees and so partly sponsored by the UN refugee agency. The Palestinian Ministry of Health is responsible for a significant proportion of other families' fees, but are several years behind on their payments. The centre has a private section catering for women who need daily therapy following strokes or accidents, and the fees received from these patients helps to cover some of the centre's expenses.

As part of its CBR programme, the centre has its own school over 700 children, from primary to sixth form age, in which more than 100 physically disabled and deaf children are taught in mainstream classes alongside their able-bodied peers. This was the first school of its kind in the Palestinian territory and has proved so successful that the Palestinian Educational Authority has made the mainstreaming of disabled students one of its policies. The school is recognised by the authorities and when children leave they can transfer easily to their local school.

Twenty young adults with special needs are taught crafts such as basket making and light carpentry in the Vocational Training Sheltered Workshop. As part of the CBR, this department also offers training in other skills that will be useful in the community, giving patients greater independence.



Mohammad (back row) and Reem (front row, right) study at the centre's school. Both of them are visually impaired and their first school was the Helen Keller Centre, another of BibleLands' Partners. When they were ready to move to a mainstream secondary school, they came to the Princess Basma Centre. Their old school, with the co-operation of the staff at the Princess Basma Centre, continues to provide the additional support that they need. Attending this school has enabled these two children to continue their education in an appropriate environment, that allows them to achieve their potential. This has helped them to gain confidence, not just in the classroom, but also in their day-to-day lives.

The centre's Physiotherapy Unit treats over 600 outpatients each year, as well as the inpatients, as well as outpatients. Treatment is offered at a competitive rate and the money that this department brings in helps the centre to run its other programmes.

The centre has an Orthopaedic Workshop, where braces, artificial limbs, crutches and special boots are made for both the in- and outpatients. BibleLands contributed over £25,000 towards the equipping of this Workshop, which is used by over 400 people each year.



Mrs Betty Majaj, the Director (*above, right*), is conscious that it is only through the grace of God, and the support of friends, that the centre has been able to achieve so much over the years; "We believe that prayer is very powerful, as we keep experiencing it in our day to day life."

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