

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

### Arab Evangelical School, Hebron

#### How it all started

The Arab Evangelical School and Home was founded in 1954, by twin sisters Ada and Ida Stoltzfus, who were American missionaries. They were working with economic refugees – people who had lost their land as the new nation of Israel was being created from Palestinian territory. Through this work, they came across many needy children and from this grew the establishment of a boarding school, originally named the Mennonite Orphanage for Boys.

The school aims to provide the highest standard of academic and social schooling to all its students. Priority admission is given to boarding students and those from poor families. The school teaches its pupils according to its motto, which is taken from Proverbs 22 verse 6: *Teach a child to choose the right path and when he is older he will remain upon it.* The Directors, Gregg and Rawda Doolittle, and most of the staff are Christian, whilst the majority of the pupils are from Muslim families.

#### Key facts

Founded: 1954

Location: Hebron, West Bank

First Grant from BibleLands: 1978

BibleLands' Grant: £59,484 p.a.



*Some of the students during assembly*

The city of Hebron, about 20 miles south of Jerusalem, was once the capital of Israel. King David ruled from this town before moving the capital to Jerusalem. It is a very ancient city, with the tombs of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Rebecca and Leah in its great mosque.

The city is sacred both to Muslims and Jews and unfortunately violent clashes are not uncommon. During the current Intifada, the tensions have become worse and basic supplies, such as electricity and water, are often cut off. Some of the teachers and pupils have found it difficult, and at times impossible, to get to the school, especially the many teachers who live in Bethlehem, a mostly Christian town.

All of this has affected the students families too: with unemployment as high as 70%, many of the families are unable to pay their children's school fees, which obviously has an effect on the school's budget.

## Current Activities:

*The School:* This primary school has up to 350 students, aged between 4 and 12 years. The children follow the Palestinian government's curriculum, with a special emphasis on music and literature, and they learn English from an early age.

Most of the students come from very poor homes and from families affected by sickness, bereavement or the current conflict. They receive a good education – the key to future employment. The school is very popular, with a long waiting list of potential pupils. Most of the pupils are boys, but a growing number of girls are accepted at the school. Each year, more parents ask for their children to be enrolled at the school, but many of them have to be turned down, as there is simply not enough room for any more children.

Although most of the children are Muslims, there are Christian assemblies every day and each Christmas the pupils take part in a Nativity play, to which many visitors come.

*The Home:* There are about 35 boarders at the school, who are all boys. These children are unable to live with their families for a variety of reasons, but they return home to visit their parents at weekends, and also return home for the Christmas, Easter and summer holidays. The boys help out with chores such as washing up, laying the tables or helping to carry fruit and vegetables back from the market to the school.

## The Future:

The school recently purchased some land in Hebron, on which they plan to construct a new school building. Their current premises is rented and having a building of their own is a long-held dream.

Other future plans include beginning a class for children with special educational needs, as well as starting a class for children with hearing impairments, with a laboratory alongside to help care for their needs.

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The effectiveness of a school is seen through its pupils and many students from this school do well in their secondary education and then continue to study at university. Three former pupils are even teachers at the school. Many parents say that this school is the best in Hebron.

Sponsorship enables each student to have a secure childhood, education and hope for the future. Thank you for helping this to happen.

## Contact us:

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