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Overcoming discrimination...

British newspapers were recently filled with reports suggesting that the prime minister, Gordon Brown, had bullied members of staff at Number 10. Discussion shows and letters pages became full of people offering opinions and expressing their concern that the leader of the country was potentially involved in such activity.

The hype surrounding the story clearly demonstrates that such behaviour is considered unacceptable in our society. However, there are circumstances faced by some countries in which bullying, while considered wrong, is still able to have far more sway. This is particularly true of the situation faced by disabled people in Lebanon.

The last time a survey was undertaken by the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1992, it revealed there were 150,000 disabled people living within Lebanon. Of those, only 20,000 were being catered for by the available centres; what's more many of these centres did not have specialised programmes and merely sought to provide shelter and care. There is also still a culture in which disabled people are not socially accepted and even sometimes badly treated.

Since its creation in 1957 the Al-Kafaàt Foundation has sought to overcome these misconceptions and provide a valuable service, as it focuses on 'capabilities not disabilities'. Its latest project is the development of a centre for training and sheltered employment for individuals with cerebral palsy.

Building work started in June 2009, and when the work is complete 250 adults with cerebral palsy will be able to take advantage of its facilities which will include workshops where they can make a living. Previously many of them will have found it hard to get into the labour market due to attitudes to their disability. Al-Kafaàt's director, Raif Shwayri, said, 'they want to live life to the full, have work, take part in leisure activities, be involved in theatre, do gardening, or anything else that you, me, or any person care to do.'

'Well, the Village delivers just that; a real environment but one that flows at a different tempo, to a rhythm that can stimulate the individual and not impede his or her capacities.'

Let's pray for the building work as it takes place, and for those who will benefit from it over the years to come.