

ANNUAL REPORT 2012

Ramallah, Palestine



Stars of Hope Society for Empowerment of Women with Disabilities



Towards better lives of Women with Disabilities in Palestine and in the Arab States



Annual Report 2012

Throughout the various programs implemented in 2012, Stars of Hope remains to operate for empowering women with disabilities in Palestine and Arab States to the degree they are able assert their dignity as right holders in the society at all levels equal to non-disabled women.

Annual Report 2012

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1. Overview

1.1 Women with Disabilities in changing contexts in the Arab world

Persons with disabilities (PWDs) comprise at least 15 % of the global population¹, with approximately 80 % living in developing countries. While the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) supports participation and access to decision-making as vital for gender equality and the participation in public & political life, WwDs and their representative organisations in the Middle East (ME) as in other parts of the world are still under-represented in political processes and decision-making at local or national levels. Likewise, their distinct experience and concerns remain largely invisible and unaddressed in law and policy making. The lack of information on barriers to and facilitators for their political participation, poor

capacities of WWDs and their organisations as regards political processes and effective means of promoting their participation, and the fact that political participation of WWDs is still an emerging issue, contribute to the absence of WWDs and their concerns in the current democratic transformation processes in the region.

It is also widely acknowledged that, regardless of where in the world they live, women with disabilities are one of the most marginalized, neglected, violated, excluded and isolated groups in society. Women with disabilities throughout the world suffer manifold discrimination - female, poor and disabled-compounded further by intersections of race and culture. Women with disabilities remain largely invisible and voiceless, ignored by national policies and laws, even though they face multiple forms of

¹ WHO (2011), World Disability Report, <http://iashub.org/resources/17>.

discrimination, structural poverty and social exclusion ([UNFPA 2005](#)). Their issues, needs and demands are neglected within services and programs across all sectors. They are excluded from social movements designed to advance the position of women, and the position of people with disabilities. They are subject to oppression and exploitation in all areas of their lives. Women and girls with disabilities are the most vulnerable and least protected ([WWDA 2002](#), [UN ESCAP Workshop on Women and Legal 2003](#)).

There are a number of international human rights instruments that delineate the clear and specific responsibilities of governments to address discrimination against women. Examples include: the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993). The need for the universal application to women of the rights and principles

with regard to equality, security, liberty, integrity and dignity of all human beings, are enshrined in a number of other international human rights instruments, including for example: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990).

The Arab spring has created new spaces for CSOs engagement and public decision-making and the participation of CSOs will be crucial for lasting democratization. However, these processes are not yet inclusive since the engagement of DPOs is compromised by a lack of capacities and their poor recognition by state / non-state actors as legitimate partners in policy reform dialogues. Given the limited understanding of public authorities of disability and a RBA,

PwDs and their representative organizations are rarely consulted or involved in decision making processes across all levels when decisions and policies are made that impact on their civic freedoms and participation. Likewise, WwDs and their concerns are seldom included and addressed by mainstream women's rights organizations and the women's rights agenda in the region. During periods of civic discontent & unrest and political transition, the popular idea is to achieve change for the majority without considering the interests and needs of marginalized groups such as PwDs and WwDs in particular. This often leads to new governments and civic structures that may improve conditions for great parts of the population but still fail to protect and promote the human rights of marginalized citizens.

Development practice shows increased emphasis on activating and involving DPOs in policy-making & reform processes. However, current projects in the

region focus on support to the disability movement in general to promote disability rights with civil & political society, DPOs participation in local development and sector-wise interventions (e.g. promotion of education or livelihood for PwDs)². Responses to the under-representation of WwDs in political processes also often address only the physical accessibility of polling stations and public buildings. As such, WwDs and their distinct situation and needs are not equally addressed by and benefit from current initiatives. This project aims to address these gaps as the first of its kind in the region: It enhances the understanding of WwDs and their organisations of the concept of politics and WwDs' political participation & rights and mechanisms how to claim them and CSOs' understanding of the relevance and process of political engagement of WwDs enabling them to include and address

² For example the MUSAWA project: <http://www.musawa-me.org/english.php>

WWDs and their political rights in their initiatives. This way, the programme will establish much needed good practice in this field and further the understanding of WWDs' rights and their importance in the political arena.

1.2 About Stars of Hope

Due to discrimination against women with disabilities and the lack of organizations that target this issue, Stars of Hope Society (SHS) was founded as an effort to address the needs of women with disabilities and support them in realizing their rights. Since its foundation in 2006, SHS has been eager to increase awareness about women with disabilities, their status, reality and needs as an endeavor to promote equality in education, employment and all walks of life. Furthermore, SHS has been successful in increasing awareness among women with disabilities on their rights, as well as building their capacities and developing their professional skills to increase their chances when

demanding equal job opportunities.

1.3 Our Vision

Equal rights and opportunities for women with disabilities

1.4 Our Mission

With reference to human rights framework, international agreements, and the need to promote WWD reality, Stars of Hope Society (SHS) was founded with the mission to abolish disability and gender discrimination; and empowering WWD to achieve equality; access to integration; and claiming their rights through implementing and rights-based development programs and projects; and advocating for the implementing, monitoring and evaluating laws, by-laws and policies.

1.5 Our Governing values

Stars of hope Society is committed in its strategic direction to the principles that inform the human

rights based approach to our work:

- **Universality &inalienability:** Human rights are universal and inalienable, the entitlement of all people everywhere in the world. An individual cannot voluntarily give them up. Nor can others take them away.
- **Indivisibility:** Human rights are indivisible .Whether civil, cultural, economic, Political or social, they are all inherent to the dignity of every person. Consequently, all human rights have equal status.
- **Interdependence & interrelatedness:** The realization of one right often depends, wholly or in part, on the realization of others.
- **Equality & non-discrimination:** All individuals are equal as human beings, and by virtue of the inherent dignity of each person, are entitled to their rights without discrimination of any kind.
- **Participation and inclusion:** All people have the right to participate in and access information relating to the

decision – making processes that affect their lives and well-being.

- **Accountability:** State and other duty –bearers are answerable for the observance of human rights. This includes both positive obligations to protect, promote and fulfill human rights, as well as negative obligations to abstain from rights violations.

1.6Our Goals

- 1) Promoting legislative and policy processes and instruments that include, protect and empower women with disabilities
- 1) Advance the self-representation of women with disabilities and their engagement in decision and policy making processes
- 2) Improve the inclusion of gender and disability in the activities and mandates of relevant national, regional and international non state actors

3) Promote the development of and access to a pool of knowledge & information on the situation of women with disabilities at local, regional and international levels

4) Further Develop SHS's profile and organizational capacities to achieve its goals and deliver on the strategy

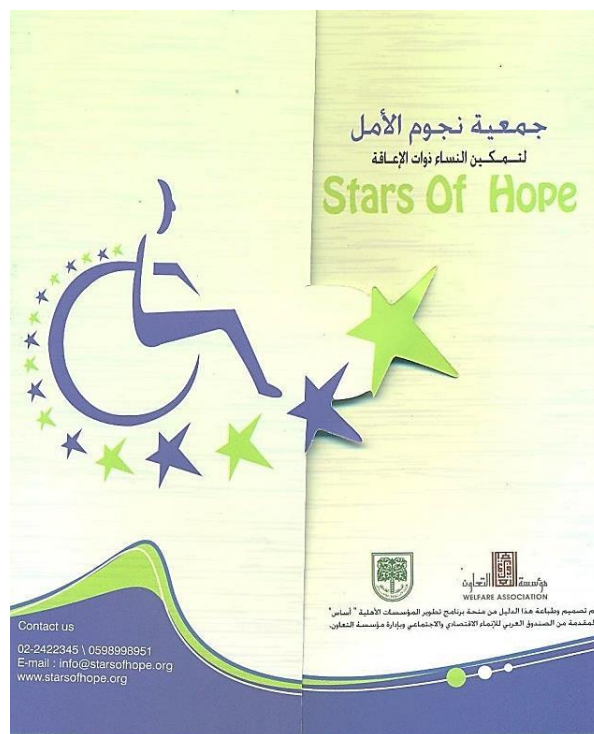
OUR WORK

SHS' Main Activities 2012



2. Stars of Hope Main Activities 2012

Throughout 2012, SHS succeeded with support from diverse donors to implement a wide range of activities. In addition, the research unit succeeded to publish a unique series of publications of different topics related to WwDs and their contexts. Same time, SHS continued over 2012 to act according to its mission and vision toward achieving tangible changes in the attitudes towards women with disabilities and fight negative stereotypes, discrimination and inequality. The summary of our areas of intervention is listed here in details :



2.1 Access to microfinance for marginalized WwDs

Following the Project Cycle Management training, micro grants were disbursed to around 20 women with disabilities in the different geographical areas in the West Bank, to support them in developing a small business and/or improving previously existing ones. This project has created positive impact on them both from financial and psychological aspects.



2.2 Training WwDs on access to employment

In June 2012, twenty women with hearing, visual and physical impairments have enhanced their knowledge over a 5 days training in employability skills. The target group of this training was women with disabilities seeking job opportunities within civil society organizations.



2.3 Employment of WWDs into Civil Society Organizations

Stars of Hope, this year has succeeded in supporting paid internships for a period of three months for a total of around 100 women with disabilities, with the aim of mainstreaming those women with disabilities into civil society organizations. A great impact has been left on those WWDs, and a great experience has been gained. On another hand, some of them have been given permanent positions, enabling more self-confidence and inclusion in their society. Several success stories we documented and disseminated.



2.4 Project Cycle Management Training

In April 2012, eighteen women with hearing, visual and physical impairments have improved and enhanced their knowledge regarding Project Cycle Management through a 5 days training. The main target group of this training was women with disabilities seeking professional skills to advance their current projects or to start a new micro project.



2.5 Training of women with disabilities on rights and legal entitlements:

As a way to increase the access of women with disabilities to justice, twenty women with disabilities have participated in training about "legal rights within related international and national instruments". This training was organized and delivered by professional lawyers selected by different applications from all over the West Bank. SHS worked with the trainer to ensure that the course was fully accessible to all women.



2.6 Training of Lawyers

As a way to contribute to the mainstreaming of disability within organizations, more than twenty fresh graduate lawyers from Al Najah University and Arab American University of Jenin attended training by Stars of Hope Society on Rights of Women with Disabilities, and how to mainstream legal aspects of women with disabilities into their work. Professional lawyers took the lead to train the lawyers



on legal matters while SHS staff took part in presenting disability issues within the training.

2.7 Advocacy and Capacity Building Workshops

Stars of hope held an advocacy workshop on October to publish and discuss the results of the studies, with different west bank DPOs. The event gathered around 30 persons representing more than 15 DPOs working with different types of disabilities and in different geographical areas all over the west bank. SHS team presented the two studies,



and a roundtable discussion took place as many questions and recommendations were discussed. Throughout the workshop, a film titled “postponed rights” was also presented to the audience. The film was published by Stars of Hope, and the aim behind it was to shed the light on the rights of Women with Disabilities express the experience of a women with disability who took a part in the last elections for the local government, and presenting different facts and experiences accordingly.

2.8 Mainstreaming Disability into civil Society organizations

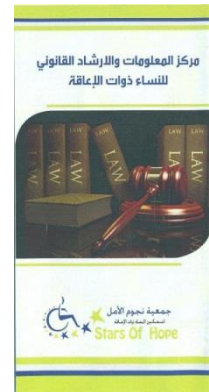
As a way to mainstream disability into civil organizations, four youth organizations have been given a training course about gender, disability and inclusive development. The aim of the training was to motivate those youth organizations to mainstream disability into their activities. Following the training that was held, three



organizations came up with ideas for a small project, where activities and estimated budget have been stated for each. Initiatives have been provided to them, to help them implement the activities that come up with, achieving the main goal of the project that is mainstreaming disability.

2.9 Information and legal consultation centre

Throughout this year, we have managed to develop the Information and legal consultation centre in Jenin- Iradeh Centre in partnership with the “Silet Hartheyyeh” governorate. The information centre is in process by a part time lawyer who meets women with disabilities and follows the procedures and reports to Stars of Hope. Until now, more than 40 women with disabilities visited the centre and went through the system. Many girls expressed and reported being exposed to different violations of rights which were supervised to go through legal processes such as going to courts, or referred to the independent commission for human rights, and others received the knowledge on how they can protect their rights in different life situations. A common way is that those WwDs are being educated on the presence of national and international instruments, which support them and give them the baseline to claim their rights.



2.10 Accessibility in transportations

Stars of Hope Society has partnered with Handicap International on adopting public transportation in regards to physical adaptations to vehicles, attitudes and approach to deal with persons with disabilities. An action plan has been developed; including:



- Total 25 taxi drivers were trained on Rights based approach to deal with people with disabilities, besides technical coaching in different geographical areas.
- In cooperation with HI, the ministry of transportation committed to amend Disability curriculum within the curriculum provided by the ministry while issuing driving licences.
- Training for 25 persons with disabilities on their rights to use the public transportation and on how to advocate for their rights.

2.11 “Feminism and self-care workshop, Istanbul”

With more than 30 women activists from different women organizations in west bank, Gaza and green area, SHS staff has participated in a workshop held in Istanbul for three days named “feminism and self-care” organized by Kvinna till Kvinna which helped to explore self-care and well-being at the personal and organizational/movement levels using the framework of the five aspects of well-being: physical, emotional, mental/intellectual, spiritual, and relational/intimate.



2.12 International visitor program participation in USA

Three of SHS staff have participated for one month in a program funded by the U.S consulate called (international visitor) which aims to open the chance for people working in the field of disability rights in Palestine to discover different services available to people with disabilities and facilities people with disabilities have in USA. The visit included visits to seven states and each included different programs in order to show the visitor group different services and facilities available for people with disabilities in each state.

2.13 Rights of People with Disabilities in work

SHS has conducted an advocacy campaign in Tulkarem governorate named “Rights of people with disabilities in work” and it was implemented on a form of an artistic show started by a drama play in Public Street which gathered a large number of people who were in the place, and followed by a poet presentation and an arts exhibition. This experience was an effective way to deliver the message on the rights of people with disabilities in work in a very simple and understandable way.



2.14 Advocacy for better access for rights of women with disabilities through media

As a way to raise the awareness of the community about disabilities and the problems that people with disabilities in general and women with disabilities in specific face, Stars of Hope Society in partnership with Radio Nissa FM presented a program under the name of “Forgotten Rights”. This program was published twice a week, for an hour each day, for a total of 10 series. The following issues have been covered;

- Education.
- Employment in governmental and civil organizations.

- Transportation
- Environmental Accessibility
- Health.
- Vocational Training.
- Marriage and interaction in social life activities.
- Participation in the political life.
- Independent living

One woman with disability along with one decision maker have participated in each series, where women with disabilities got the chance to talk about the challenges that they face and encounter, and



about their success stories in front of the decision makers and in front of everyone who listen to the program throughout the west Bank. Thus, their voice has been spread across the West Bank.

From another aspect, and also as a way to raise awareness, a TV spot that shed the light on the problem of environmental accessibility that women with disabilities face, has been published on four Local TVs in the West Bank three times a day, and for a period of around two months. Moreover, Stars of Hope Chairwoman of the Board had different chances to attend programs on the TV, where also the light was shed on the problems and

difficulties that women with disabilities face.

Furthermore, three different articles were written in newspapers and magazines targeting women with disabilities issues, which are:

- An article about “time to break additional barriers- People with disabilities fighting every day for their right to freedom of movement, respect and dignity.
<http://www.thisweekinpalestine.com/details.php?id=3675&ed=205&edid=205>
- Another article shed the light on the problems of transportation that women with disabilities face.
- The third article was about the political participation for women with disabilities.

OUR WORK

3.

SHS's Publications 2012

Providing evidence-based information to support advocacy and professionals and community education.



3. Publications:

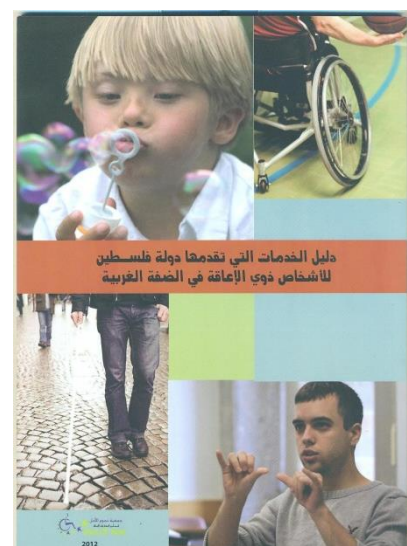
3.1 Legal Review of relevant laws in relation to Gender and Disability:

Stars of Hope produced a legal review of relevant laws in relation to gender and disability. The aim of this study was to revise the Laws starting from the primary legislation to sub-legislations and compare how the sub-legislations are contrary to the primary Law regarding the rights of people with disabilities. Two consultants were hired to implement this task. The legal review has been designed and printed out in Arabic and later translated into English, and copies have been distributed to DPO's, focal points, stakeholders, People with Disabilities and others.



3.2 Directory on services and entitlements provided by the government for people with disabilities in light of the Law:

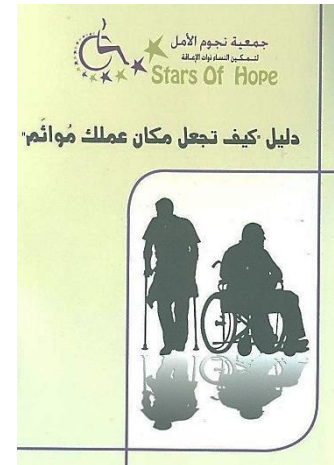
In partnership with Ministry of Social Affairs, Stars of Hope has produced a directory on services and entitlements provided by the government for people with disabilities. The directory was established to raise the overall awareness among women with disabilities in particular about the package of services delivered by the government and how PwDs can approach them. Inversely, the directory also addressed the gap between the law and its guiding principles vs. services delivered and/or not delivered. The directory has also been designed and printed out in Arabic



and later translated to English. Over 1000 copies were distributed to DPO's, focal points, stakeholders and others through the different awareness trainings that were conducted with the objective of introducing the two studies, and having further discussions and recommendations about.

3.3 “How to make your work place accessible”

As a result of giving the chance for a large number of women with disabilities to work within civil society organizations for a period of three months through an employment program, stars of hope thought that it is important to increase the knowledge and awareness of these organizations on the importance of making their work places accessible for people with disabilities, therefore, stars of hope produced a brochure called “how to make your workplace accessible” which was distributed to a large number of organizations in the west bank.



3.4 Film "Postponed Rights"

as a key findings of the two studies mentioned above, that showed a big gap in the Law regarding the right of political participation for women with disabilities, it was important for Stars of Hope to shed the light on this important issue. A film named “Postponed Rights” was produced, expressing the experience of a woman with disability who took part in the last elections for the local government, and presenting different facts and experiences accordingly.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMeHiJlho7o&feature=youtu.be>

OUR WORK

4.

Women with Disabilities Changing their Lives

SUCCESS STORIES, MY JOB MY LIFE



4. Success Stories; My Job My life

4.1 Story I.

Name: Mayyada Ghannam

Age: 25

Location: Ramallah, Palestine

Impairment: Visual



"...I tried to seek jobs hundred times, I've applied to the Ministry of Education and did great at the exam but when it comes for the interview I was get rejected as "physically unfit to work" and "can only work at Schools for the Blind". I lost faith in employers until I got my first real chance through SHS's employment project. I worked for three months at a lab for people with visual disabilities at Al- Quds Open University since I have had many computer training courses. As the project came closer to its end, I worried about the next step-how to get employed again and what to do! Will the project ensure future opportunities or will it be an only one experience? Indeed, I was surprised to hear that the university was interested to hire me as an official employee at their lab..." says Mayyada.

The benefits didn't stop at getting a permanent position for Mayyada; she already increased her experience and skills in using the computer as well as creating a social network through my job. "...This helped me defeat the barrier of disability and convince those around me that WwDs have so many potentials and skills and they just need to be give them a chance.." added Mayyada.

As for the financial benefits, her happiness was great for receiving a monthly paycheck in return for her, she earned it. "...It helped me pay for the university tuition and transportation for I am pursuing higher education at Birzeit University. Now I am more seen as a productive and independent person which gives me more confidence and strengthened my will.."

4.2 Story II.

Name: Sahaab Mustafa Abu Geish

Age: 39

Location: Nablus, Palestine

Impairment: Visual



After I graduated from Birzeit University with a major in Arabic Language, I applied many times for work at the Ministry of Education but the dominant culture is quite narrow minded even for educated people especially when it comes to visual disability and that really brought me down so I stopped applying.

After a number of attempts, I got what I was looking for through SHS's project. I had known about SHS before the project and I benefitted greatly from the trainings they implemented for PWD.

During this project, I worked at the Nablus Municipality Library, specifically at the department for those with visual disabilities. I devised a plan to develop this department despite my disability.

While I worked at this department I met new people and got to know about people's psychological makeup and their way of thinking. My presence there reminded them of PWDs and their suffering but also made them aware of PWDs capabilities when given the chance.

When I first started working, I was too shy to move around the office on my own in front of the other employees but with time, I started moving on my own without needing anyone else. I am happy and proud to have been able to change the way people around me thought of PWD.

Moreover, for three months I received a monthly paycheck which benefitted me greatly and helped me provide the many needed things of my daily life, thanks.

4.3 Story II.

Name: Ikhlās Al- Barghouthi

Age: 37

Location: Ramallah, Palestine

Impairment: Physical



My first work experience was at a factory where they make accessories and it only lasted one month.

After that, I worked in the municipality of Ramallah and Al-Bireh through the Palestinian General Union of People with Disabilities where I was a member, but for health conditions, I became unable to work at the factory and was absent for a long time so I lost my job there.

I was quite unfortunate in finding a job, and when I would find one it would be temporary, until I was chosen for SHS's Employment Project and I chose Al-Nukhba Academy to work there where I was welcomed and offered help. My job was information and data entry to the computer and I worked as a liaison

between the center and the students and the beneficiaries.

I gained extra experience in that period and I learned so much. I am now able to run an office and I realized I have so many potentials and skills that I was never given the chance to develop before this project.

Work is necessary, and is important for WwDs. It is a chance to leave one's house and mingle with others. It helps make new friendships and relationships and is an opportunity to prove to those around us that we are capable and productive just like everyone else. Moreover, there's the financial benefits which really helped me and gave me a sense of financial independence because it's my money and I can use it however I want to.

OUR WORK

5.

SHS's Regional Activities in the Arab states



5 SHS's Regional Activities in the Arab states



5.1 State and Shadow report to the UNCRPD

Advanced Regional TOT on state and shadow reports to the UNCRPD was conducted; An adapted toolkit was developed on Inclusive policies for WwDs, monitoring policies and law for WWD and Reporting policies and law for WwDs . The first cycle of regional training was conducted on the 26-29th of Jan, 2012 gathering 14 women with disabilities from 5 countries; 3 from Yemen, 3 from Egypt, 3 from Palestine, 4 from Jordan and one from Sudan . The training focused on the political changes taking place in the countries following the revolution what are the key changes accompanying that macro change as regards to disability issues , also, what role can women with disabilities play to be more visible and acknowledged . Following the training, a detailed action plan was sit on next steps to support the women to analyze the content and develop the right advocacy mechanisms.

5.2 Legal review in Arab States

SHS Conducted legal review and analysis of current national laws and policies on disability within the context of the UNCRPD (Yemen, Palestine, Jordan, Egypt & Lebanon) from gender and disability perspectives.

5.3 Support to Advocacy initiatives in Yemen through grants

SHS supported an initiative in Yemen to advocate for equal access and recognition for WwDs within the existing elections, the initiative has been implemented by our partner organization and network on women with disabilities

5.4 Training on UNCRPD, gender, disability and CEDAW.

The second cycle of regional training was conducted on the 12,13, 14th July Gathering 12 women with disabilities from 5 countries (2 from Yemen, 2 from Egypt, 2 from Palestine, 3 from Jordan and 3 from Sudan). The whole training concentrated on the understanding of systemic monitoring and what are the best methodologies to monitor gender and disability situations by DPOs using the DRPI tools. The whole training was co-facilitated by DRPI team and the regional consultant who will be facilitating and technically supporting the women during the data collection and analyses phases in the countries, the training ended with clear action plan for the implementation phase in each country.



5.4 National trainings

On 5th of July a 2 days training was organized by stars of Hope to 21 fresh graduate lawyers, as a realization for the importance of their understanding and support around National Laws and regulations regarding People with Disabilities with emphases on women with disabilities. The training was delivered by trained WWDs on gender and disability rights, advocacy, state and shadow reports to the UNCRPD.



THANK YOU

6. Our Donors and Contributors

We sincerely acknowledge and thank the contribution of donors, funding bodies, sponsors and volunteers who have been so vital to making this year such a successful one for Women with Disabilities in Palestine and Arab States, Special Thanks goes to:



Kvinna till Kvinna



PONTIFICAL MISSION SOCIETIES
Catholic Diocese of Arlington





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