

Stars of Hope Society

For the empowerment of women with disabilities



Annual Report 2010

Stars of Hope Society for the Empowerment of WWD

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Table of contents:

- Letter of Chairwoman
- About Us
- The status of women with disabilities in Palestine
- Our Vision
- Our mission
- Our goal
- Policies and program area
- SHS in the spotlight
- Two generations graduate of the Future Leader program
- Designing the SHS background paper
- The first national conference on the employment of wwds
- Knowledge advancement for wwds, Local trainings package
- "Forgotten Women": The documentary film about the realities on the lives of wwds
- The Health text book for women with disability
- Boosting-up spirits of wwds: The peer support sessions
- Learning the path to an "Independent Living", workshop / Jericho resorts
- Entertainment and relaxation for wwds, Sports activities / welfare
- Advocating through sports

- Raising awareness about wvds in youth
- How good are the rehabilitation services for pvdv
- Introducing SHS to the public
- Kvinna Till Kvinna around the globe
- Ministry of Social Affairs
- Ministry of culture affairs / annual newsletter
- Al-Quds educational TV
- Media coverage
- Ministry of transport
- Accessibility of roads at Halhoul, Hebron
- Dimensions / Diakonia
- The annual report of 2009
- A success story
- Achievements
- Future plans
- Announcements

Letter of Chairwoman

Stars of Hope Society (SHS) for the Empowerment of Women with Disabilities is a local support network, run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities. We believe that only women with disabilities can fight for their rights. Before we started Stars of Hope many women with disabilities had nowhere to turn for advice and support. Most were just left to languish at home, often without medical attention or a basic education. In times of war, women with disabilities are low on the pecking order; I have seen so many bright and talented young women demeaned because of an injury or genetic illness which left them disabled. Indeed, I am all too conscious of the inequality that surrounds women with disabilities. Following the discovery of a tumor on my spine, I was left paralyzed from the waist down at the age of 12. Many people believed that I would never get married, but I am married to a wonderful man, and I have a beautiful son. I'm living proof that disabled women can live a very full life.

I devoted much of my life to raising awareness about the rights of women with disabilities and in 2006 I was able to launch Stars of Hope. At the time I was travelling abroad and I was introduced to similar organizations, which inspired me. So Stars of Hope was formed with seven women with disabilities and virtually no financial backing. Initially we'd meet in each other's houses to discuss what we could do to change society's perception of women with disabilities.

Unfortunately financial backing proved to be an issue in the early days, but the women persevered. After we registered with the government we realized that we needed to organize an official address. Money was tight and often when the rent for our office was due, I would pay for it myself. These days most of the fundraising is done through word of mouth and I meet with local companies regularly with a view of attaining donations. People have been generous, but we're always in need. We also organize stalls at the market where our members sell handicrafts that they have made. Every little bit helps.



Chairwoman of Society

Ola Abu Al-Gheib

About Us:

SHS is a lead organization for women with all types of disabilities in Palestine. It is the only organization of its kind in Palestine and one of a very small number internationally. It is inclusive and does not discriminate against any disability.

The society seeks to ensure opportunities in all walks of life for all women with disabilities. In this the society aims to increase awareness of, and address issues faced by, women with disabilities in the community. The society seeks to ensure the advancement of education of Palestinian society to the status and needs of women with disabilities in order to promote equity, reduce suffering, poverty, discrimination and exploitation of women with disabilities. Stars of Hope Society is unique in that, it operates as a national disability organization; a national women's organization; and a national human rights organization.

The status of women with disability in Palestine

Discrimination against women with disability is still in Palestine as in most societies, all pervasive. Although attitudes towards disabilities resulting from injury during the Intifada years are less discriminatory, general attitudes of prejudice and ignorance subject women with a disability to discrimination on daily basis on every level, in terms of opportunities for schooling, work, marriage, and status within society.

Furthermore, to date the issue of careers and advocacy of women with disabilities has remained a marginalized issue, and hence women with disabilities remain not only vulnerable and disadvantaged but also in many cases isolated within the community.

Palestinian women with disabilities face a double set of prejudices, based on gender and disability. The community often sees them in terms of stereotypes: childlike, dependent, incompetent, asexual, unable to take on the role of worker, sexual partner, or mother. As a result, they are left confused about who they are, and who they can become. It is clear that Palestinian women with disability are in need of much support, however there are no specific programs targeting their needs seriously. Based on this fact SHS was established with a goal of supporting women with disabilities in the Palestinian territories to improve the level of their lives.

The main challenge in this issue was how much this strategic plan will be compatible with the actual needs and requirements of women with different types of disabilities. Therefore, SHS together with the consultant decided to use a participatory approach extensively to yield a strategic plan that express the aspiration of the Palestinian women with disabilities. As such, a three days workshop was conducted joining about 35 women with different disabilities from the different governorates of West Bank. The motivate environment created during the workshop encouraged the participants to express their needs, priorities, objectives, threatens, hopes, and to identify the activities and programs which they believe will help them in achieving their goals and anticipations.

In this report the consultant builds on the outputs of the three-day workshop in developing a three-year strategic plan for SHS for the benefit of Palestinian women with disability

Our coming up strategic plan:

SHS will be holding a workshop together with a consultant to build up our coming up strategy for the coming up three years.



Our Vision

To improve lives and life chances of Palestinian

Women with disability



Our Mission

To establish a sustainable system that grants full

Access to all aspects of life for women with

Disabilities in Palestine,

And work diligently towards access, equity, and full participation of women with disabilities;

This will be achieved through public education, coalition-building, research, self-advocacy, resource development, information and communication technology.



Our Goal

Looking forward to achieve its vision and mission,

Stars of Hope society is committed to:

- Actively promoting the participation of women with disabilities in all aspects of social, economic, political and cultural life;
- Advocating on issues of concern to women with disabilities in Palestine and;
- Seeking to be the national representative organization for women with disabilities in Palestine by: undertaking systemic advocacy; providing policy advice; undertaking research; and providing support, information and education.

SHS aims to work with the government on new legislations, policies and services for the disabled.

This report provides an inside look of the ways Stars of Hope operates.

SHS work focuses

On the following areas, and you'll be able to see that in this report:

- Empowering women with disabilities to be included and participate in community service.
- Developing the status of women with disabilities humanly, socially and economical:
- Supporting Palestinian women with disabilities, seeking to represent them, and defending their issues.
- Conducting psychosocial and recreational programs through sport activities, camps, yoga etc.....

In Other Words:

Development; Awareness; Inclusion.

Policy and Program Areas:

Our organization's priority policy and program areas include but not limited to:

- Leadership and Mentoring
- Information Technology and communication
- Health
- Accessibility
- Systemic Advocacy and awareness programs
- Organizational development
- Development of country and regional WWD groups and networks
- Psychosocial support and peer counseling
- Parenting counseling
- Violence against women with disabilities
- Employment and training opportunities
- Promotion of income generation projects for women with disabilities

Stars of Hope in the spotlight

Despite our small resources we managed to accomplish a significant number of outcomes during these past 12 months, Here is a brief but detailed summary of this year's program:

Two generations graduate of the Future Leaders training program

As one of our best interests to help women with disabilities become more professional, every year we provide women with disabilities with trainings and activities, among them was the Future leaders program where at the beginning of the year, more than fifteen women with hearing, visual and physical disabilities proudly graduated on the Second cycle of the training with a diploma in proposal writing, English Language, computer and communication skills, The target of the second cycle training was employed WWDs seeking professional skills to advance and become more professional at their careers.

A call for the third cycle of this program was announced mid-year to contract a local center to train WWDs in dynamic power for effective team work, communication and creative thinking, leadership, time management, stress management, money, psychology, work protocols, customer service, determining unique indicators, foundation of values, objectives and behaviors, etc. After looking at all the 10 centers applications received, we decided to contract the same training center that has been training our members for two consecutive years; we also considered that this center already have some experience to ensure a disability sensitive training course. Furthermore, we see this as an opportunity to mainstream WWDs into local centers' programs and activities. It is worth mentioning here that the management of the chosen local training center was hesitant to train WWDs during the first two cycles of this program as they had no previous experience working or training WWDs. After more than two years of working closely with us and training our members, the management of the chosen local center is now approaching DPO's to offer trainings to PWDs.

The target group for the third cycle of the Future Leaders Training Program was WWDs seeking opportunities in the job market, not necessary recent graduates. Participants were carefully selected through an open process; open call, applications and interviews. At the end of the third cycle of the "Future Leaders training" Twenty women with disabilities (four hearing disabilities, six visual disabilities and ten physical disabilities) were selected and have participated in thirteen intensive training days on the topics mentioned above.

During their graduation ceremony, the participants expressed their positive evaluation of the training. They were satisfied with the training content, and the added social values. This training was the first activity away-from-home for most of the participants, and the first social gathering with non-family members for almost all of them. Moreover, the participants expressed interest in taking advanced courses on the same training topics.

It is worth mentioning here that the participants discussed how this training gave them a boost to fight for opportunities in the job market despite all difficulties they faced in the past.



**The trainees of the second cycle of
The training graduated on February
Of this year.**



**The graduates of the third cycle of the
training in December of this year.**

Designing the SHS Background paper

As a need to raise the awareness about the status, needs and realities of women with disability, as a hope to change the isolated situation of women with disability, to improve their lives to better and integrate them into the social life, SHS uses a systematic approach to advocate for the implementation of rights of WWDs. During the past couple of years, SHS worked on advancing the knowledge of 20 selected women with disability from Egypt, Jordan and Palestine on group empowerment, CEDAW "Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women," the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability, advocacy, building coalitions and alliances, facilitation and team work (also through empowering and raising awareness of WWDs to lead advocacy initiatives and empower other WWDs (snowball effect).

The women worked in groups of countries, interests, etc). After the first regional training, the participants organized advocacy campaigns for urgent issues of concern to WWDs in their countries. As a natural step in this systematic approach, we had organized a week-long regional training on advanced levels of the same topics mentioned above, in additions to skills on shaping issues and messages of advocacy campaigns.

SHS has contracted an external consultant with expertise on gender and disability to help our focal points in Palestine, Jordan and Egypt formulate a successful background paper on the status of women with disabilities with focus on employment. The focal points on those countries worked hard and tirelessly on collection and analysis of local laws and legislations against international instruments, statistical and stakeholder analysis, and collection of good practices and testimonies.

The consultant supervised the work of the focal points through various workshops throughout the project, and then managed to gather the necessary data from Lebanon and Yemen through field research. The first draft of the background paper was successfully used as a tool of education, awareness-raising and advocacy about the status and realities of women with disabilities in Palestine during the first national conference organized by SHS mid-December.

The findings of the background paper will be publicized beginning of the year 2011 through publication of the final draft on both Arabic and English languages. The background paper will be soon uploaded on our web page at: www.starsofhope.org



**Standing up is the international consultant
Training wwds of Jordan,Egept and
Palestine in Jordan in January of this year.**



**Yemenese wwds came to Jordan to be
trained by our intenational consultant in
August of this year.**

The first national conference on the employment of wwds

To have women with disability receive their full rights and be equal members of the community is one of our most desired vision, for that reason on December 14, 2010 and in partnership with Consulate General of USA and under the patronage of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, SHS organized a conference titled “Women with Disabilities: Rights & Realities.” The conference aimed at promoting the financial independence of women with disability through spotting some light on rights and the sad realities of women with disability in Palestine with focus on employment opportunities.

More than 220 people interested on the topic participated in the conference from a wide range of fields; diplomats (Representative Offices, Representatives of Consulate Generals, Embassies, etc), government personals, representatives of the private sector, Palestinian NGOs, International and United Nations Agencies, Civil Society Organization (women, youth and disabled people), etc.

The conference began with a panel on the status of women with disabilities in the Arab World with focus on Palestine where the background paper developed by our focal points and consultant was presented. The panel also discussed general information about participation of women in Palestine and the Palestinian experience in the rehabilitation sector.

The second panel was about laws. International development of relevant laws was outlined, as well as, weaknesses and challenges of the Palestinian disability law. Moreover, SHS presented information about challenges facing implementation of disability laws in Palestine, with particular focus on women with disabilities and employment. Microfinance was the focus of the third panel discussing microfinance experience worldwide for people with disabilities, microfinance general experience in Palestine and experience of the Palestinian Ministry of Social Affairs in micro-financing people with disabilities. The speakers were also a wide range of international and national experts in those fields.

The conference ended with discussions in three groups to propose recommendations to mainstream women with disabilities in the job market. The three groups discussed recommendations to the private sector and civil society, donors’ community and government institutions.

Some of the recommendations to the government were; activate the Higher Council of Disability and guarantee the effective participation of women with disabilities, monitor the disability law and follow up its implementation, as well as, activate the role of the State Audit and Administrative Control Bureau in monitoring the 5% of employed people with disabilities and ensuring the inclusion of women with disabilities.

Examples of recommendations to private sector and civil society include; unify the efforts of civil society organizations in mainstreaming women with disabilities in all organizations’ programs and annual strategic plans, and encourage women with disabilities to join private companies through job advertisements and enhancing accessibility of work place.

Participants of the third group emphasized on the importance of donors' role in gathering concert and comprehensive information about women with disabilities especially in rural areas, and adding conditions of accessibility to contracts between donors and local contractors to ensure participation of women with disabilities.

The participants proposed many more recommendations. SHS is currently discussing follow up plans. Check out the conference's report and recommendations at our web page: www.starsofhope.org



The opening of the conference with Ola Abu Al-Ghaib (SHS chairwoman), and Representative of the American Consulate (Esperanza), The General Secretary (Naim Abu Al-Homos) and Rami Al-Mehdawee In front of the audience.



The speakers of the conference's second phase.



WWDS (including our focal point), attended the conference and explained the difficulties they face.



WWDS making recommendations to the government, donors and private sector

Knowledge advancement for wwds, Local Trainings Package

As a need to achieve our mission on providing information and raising awareness and to facilitate the lives of wwds, SHS contracted international consultant to develop TOT packages on disability and inclusive development, gender and disability, disability rights and realities with focus on women, advocacy campaigns and initiatives, and lobbying. The package was developed and used by trained WWDs to train more WWDs in a more simplified way at their local level.



Ola Abu Al-Ghaib preparing wwds to be trainers in their local level.



We contracted international consultants to enhance the knowledge of wwds willing to pass what they learned to other wwds.

As a result of this trainings, in order to raise awareness at national level, SHS staff and focal points have organized six local trainings in Hebron, Nablus, Tulkarem, Qalqilyeh, Bethlehem and Ramallah to Seventy new and old members of SHS in a training that enhanced their knowledge and capacities on their rights as women with disabilities on topics around rights of WWDs, gender and disability, as well as, advocacy and lobbying. Furthermore, they gained skills on analyzing problems, setting goals and messages, as well as, organizing advocacy campaigns that were initiated and implemented by women with disabilities that have participated in these trainings at their local levels with a goal to facilitate their lives in the community around them. The participants of the local trainings confirmed and acted on the importance of supporting the accessibility of most popular colleges and universities in their districts. Furthermore, they expressed major concerns about access to education for girls with visual impairments. As a result of this consensus, SHS decided to unify the theme of the advocacy and community mobilization campaigns to “Access to Education,” and priority was given to accessibility for girls with visual disabilities to increase the number of graduate with visual disability. The campaigns are as follows,

- Bethlehem University, Bethlehem: The Resource Center was approached. As a result of the assessment of the accessibility of the university the following assistive devices were provided; recorders and a multilingual dictionary with a screen reader for students with visual disabilities.
- Al-Najah University, Nablus: The Disabled Students Unit was approached. As a result of the assessment of the accessibility of the university the following assistive devices were provided;

Producer Software that converts books to mp3, Book Sense that reads computer documents, Perkins Braille Printer for students with visual disabilities.

- Al Quds University, Jerusalem: Dolphin Screen Reading Software was provided.
- Al Quds Open University, Tulkarem, Qalqiliya and Ramallah: The regional office was approached, and the availability of main curriculum in Braille was seen as a priority. Therefore, SHS will be translating several curriculums in Law and Social Sciences from Arabic to Braille.

It is worth mentioning here that those devices will be made available to all students in need but will be kept as a property of the University to guarantee the benefit of more students with disabilities. In additions to providing assistive devices, SHS in coordination with those universities will be publishing a booklet about accessibility of each university. The booklet will be distributed to students, in particular those with disabilities. As a follow up, SHS will be using gathered information to pressure decision-makers to make universities and public educational venues accessible through a national workshop to be planned beginning of year 2011. Furthermore, our work with the mentioned universities will be used as good practices to promote for the accessibility of universities.

- Al-Irada center, Jenin: As a result of the needs of wwds from Jenin to enter the labor market, we financially supported Al-Irada center to provide a workshop on home-made handicrafts that will give a boost on wwds to become financially independent.



Our focal point and project coordinator led the training in Bethlehem



WWDS of Jenin producing handicrafts



Girls with disability from Nablus were divided into groups to compare the Palestinian law with UN convention. .



Our focal point explained to girls with disability of Hebron concepts on topics around advocacy...

“Forgotten Women” The documentary film about the realities on the lives of WWDS

Knowing that the media is one of the most powerful tools that impact on people's life, we decided to produce a documentary film that talks about the sad realities and facts of women with disabilities in Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen. The film begins with snap shots of a public market in Palestine, highlighting the inaccessibility of public venues to women on wheelchairs, followed by some statistics on women with disabilities around the globe. The film then goes on with acted scenes and facts of women with disabilities that are living on challenges or how they have outcome some of the challenges they face to receive proper education, employment, transportation and have a chance in the marital life in the Arab World. The film is called “Forgotten Women”. The name was selected after a long discussion through a meeting between SHS staff and the Focal Point Coordinators. The film will be hopefully used as an awareness-raising tool during advocacy events of the year 2011. Watch the documentary film at:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jSk4cT9VDxE>



Rodeyna Abu-Jarad, women with physical disability on wheelchair acted on the documentary film, she talked about barriers women with disabilities face in their lives.

“The Health Textbook for Women with Disability”

As a result of the inaccessibility of health services, the lack of awareness of health care for wwd, and as a need to improve basic health knowledge for WWDS, SHS decided to translate and publish The “Health textbook”, after receiving an authorization from the Hesperian Foundation. SHS’s goal is to raise the awareness of wwd, their families and communities around them. The textbook was translated by a freelance legal translator, and then was edited by the staff of SHS, and the language was reviewed by an external expert in the field of disability. SHS then tested the language and terminology of the book against the norms of the Palestinian society. A bid for final editing, designing, printing and distributing was announced. A local company was contracted, and the book is currently being designed and made ready for printing. The book will be available for women with disabilities and relevant civil society organizations in Arabic Language and Braille.

Boosting-up spirits of WWDS: The Peer Support sessions

As an effort to boost the spirits of WWDs and give them the confidence to talk, express, adapt and accept one’s self, SHS organized four peer support groups. The focus groups were organized and led by our focal points, women with hearing, visual and physical disabilities were chosen and brought together in small groups to talk about difficulties, challenges and problems solutions. The Peer Support sessions were held in Jericho, Ramallah, and Hebron, Jenin and surrounding villages and refugee camps. The peer support discussion began with an introduction on SHS and its activities, and then was narrowed down to personal stories by our focal points. The floor was then left to the participants to express challenges and needs, the goal of the sessions is for wwd to learn from others solutions how they can solve their own problem and actually talk about their problems to someone that have faced or is facing similar situations. At the end of the workshop, the participants were given the chance and were happy to join SHS by filling out the membership form.

As a result of those focus groups, more than sixty new members joined SHS. More than half of them have now the confidence to express challenges related to disability. Family members, personal assistants and even SHS staff that have no disabilities are not allowed to join those

discussions, so that WWDs would feel comfortable talking about their disability with their peers. The main focus of those peer support groups is success story. SHS does not overwhelm WWDs by talking about challenges only, but rather offers solutions through success stories of WWDs! SHS will hold more peer support focus groups next year to cover most regions of West Bank and Gaza.



Our focal point took the facilitator position
In the peer support session of Jericho.



WWDs from Jenin were able to relieve stress for the
first time.



The girls with disabilities from Ramallah wanted their peer support to contain only girls with hearing and speech disability.

Learning the path to an “Independent Living”, Workshop/ Jericho Resorts

In order to live as independents, wwd's have to learn the concepts and definitions of an independent life, for that reason SHS conducted a two day workshop by the end of the year, given by the father of Independent Living, Dr. Adolf Ratzka. The capacity of 18 wwd's was built up on the concepts of independent living, personal assistant and peer support; these topics focused on the Definitions and Principles of Independent Living, Difference between Independent Living and Community Based Rehabilitation, Definitions and Principles of Personal Assistance, What form of personal assistant is possible on the West Bank?, What is needed to start? Definitions and Principles of Peer Support, How does it work? What is it good for? What is needed to start?

Furthermore, their understanding of peer support (how it works, what is it good for, etc) was enhanced. They have gained more techniques of peer support that could help them run activities at the local level.

The idea of enhancing the knowledge of women with disabilities on the philosophy of independent living came as an effort to helping women with disabilities in realizing their choices, exercising more freedom and control over their own lives. Promoting the concepts of independent living, peer support and personal assistant will help us create a new social paradigm and emphasize that people with disability are the best experts in their own needs and that they have crucial and valuable perspective to contribute to society, and have the right to exercise equal opportunities and self-determination.



For the second time in Palestine, Adolf “Father of Independent Living” teaches wwds the concepts and definitions of an independent life, personal assistant and peer support.

Entertainment and Relaxation for WWDS, Sports Activities/ Welfare

In order to give wwds the chance to enjoy sports and entertain equally to other member of the society, SHS held a two-day sport activity for twenty women with disabilities in a resort in Jericho. The sports activity included horse-back riding and meditation exercises as well as breathing techniques. Twenty women with disabilities were able to relief their stress, boost their self-esteem and enjoy sports equal to other members of the society.



A girl with physical disability that uses a wheelchair is being lifted on a special engine to sit on the back of the horse.



WWDS exercising with breathing techniques to relieve their stresses.

Advocating through sports...

Sports for Change/ Mercy Corps

During the past months, SHS along with other organizations participated in a series of workshops organized by Mercy Corps “Sports for Change”. Those workshops aim at supporting sports for youth with disabilities, and using sports as a tool for advocacy and lobbying. SHS mainstreams girls with disabilities into those discussions and stresses on the importance of inclusion of people with disabilities into programs, rather than designing programs for them only.



A meeting in the middle region with the participating institution to prepare the action plan of “The Sport for Change”



The Palestinian Paralympics Council, Merci Corps and trainers of Qader institution training institutions on how to set up the Activities.

Raising awareness about WWDS in youth Samiha Khalil High School/ Ramallah

With a need to raise awareness and integrate wwds into society, and as a need to educate and raise awareness of the local community about women with disabilities SHS coordinated with a public school in Ramallah to raise the awareness of young students of the 9th and 10th grade by sending SHS’s Advocacy and Lobbying Coordinator, (a woman with physical disability). A documentary film

about women with disabilities in Palestine was shown during the presentation. The students' awareness about women with disabilities was raised and their relationship with their fellow disabled student (tenth grade student on a wheelchair) was enhanced through understanding that girls with disabilities are equal members of the community.



Our advocacy and lobbying coordinator, introduced to the students SHS, the international convention of persons with disabilities and the national law.

How good are the rehabilitation services for PWDS? Access to Physical Rehabilitation Services/ Handicap International

In order to analyze the accessibility and satisfaction of the rehabilitation services provided for PWDS, SHS partnered with 2 dpo's and Handicap International. SHS staff and volunteer members surveyed more than 140 persons with disability living in Bethlehem, Hebron and surrounding areas. SHS capacity and knowledge of accessibility of women with disabilities to physical rehabilitation services were enhanced and is more aware of the challenges facing women with physical disabilities in the south in accessing rehabilitation services. SHS and partners are now working on data analysis and recommendations for a better accessibility of rehabilitation services for wwd's.



Introducing SHS to the public:

Welfare association/ Employment Day

By mid-year, SHS gladly participated in the Employment Day organized by Welfare Association in coordination with Ramallah and Al Bireh Governance. SHS introduced its activities

and programs to university students, private companies and firms and used this as an opportunity to raise awareness about women with disabilities. SHS encouraged graduates of Palestinian universities to join the disability field either as employees or staff. SHS received more than 100 cvs and successfully spread words about its programs to those who were interested.



Hundreds of graduates became familiar with our activities

Kvinna Till Kvinna around the globe...

Storytelling Sweden Workshop

SHS staff participated in a workshop organized by Kvinna Till Kvinna on Storytelling. The purpose of the workshop was to learn the concept of storytelling in order to share information and knowledge between all the members of women organizations that participated in the workshop and the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation. Capacity of SHS staff was developed in techniques of communication and information-gathering relevant to peace and human rights work.

Outcome Mapping Workshop/ KvinnaTillKvinna

SHS Project Manager and Information Officer participated in a training organized by Kvinna Till Kvinna on Results-Based Management and Outcome Mapping. SHS capacity and understanding of management as a strategy of performance and achievement of outputs, outcomes and impacts was enhanced. The trainees of other women organizations discussed possible solutions on how to mainstream women back into public positions rather than building up more ngo's.

KvinnaTillKvinna Turkey Workshop

SHS focal point of Qalqilyeh participated along with other women organizations in the region on a workshop in Turkey on "How to Become a Leader in Your Community." The

workshop was organized by Kvinna Till Kvinna in coordination with Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights. The workshop focused on strategies for defending the rights of women. SHS participation was important in mainstreaming strategies for defending the rights of women with disabilities into strategies of other women organizations. Also, capacity of the focal point was enhanced on strategies for defending rights of women and solving difficulties facing work on the local level. She will pass on her knowledge to other focal points and staff during the next focal points meeting.



Our Focal Point went to Turkey to talk about strategies to defend the rights of women with disabilities.

Ministry of Social Affairs:

SHS is a member of a series of steering committee with the Ministry of Social Affairs in order to mainstream focus on WWDS in all their strategies

SHS was honored to be nominated to be on the steering committee by the ministry of Social Affairs, to draft a survey for the Disabled card. This steering committee also includes members of CBR, Palestinian Red Crescent Society, the Union of Disabled Palestinians, Qader, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health. The steering committee has met a few times to discuss the disability survey and to discuss the results of the pilot study and the implementation plan.

SHS is on the steering committee to draft the protection strategy for the Ministry of Social Affairs for the coming three years. The strategy was submitted to the Council of ministers approved and published by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

SHS is on the steering committee of the Higher Council of Disability headed by the Ministry of Social Affairs along with the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, the Union of Disabled Palestinians, Qader, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Health. As a member of the committee, SHS mainstreams WWDS into discussions and strategies. Unfortunately and despite the fact that the Higher Council was re-activated in order to guarantee the presence of DPOs as members, the number of DPOs within the new structure is ONLY 2 out of 18. None of the two DPOs represent women with disabilities. Stars of Hope Society is now trying to amend this structure to include more DPOs especially those representing women with disability.

SHS had a meeting with the head of the PR department at the Ministry of Social Affairs and head of Collage to organize for a huge PR campaign on disability. Collage will work on a draft concept note for the project. The partners will meet again to discuss the possibility of this joint initiative.

SHS was honored to have partnered with the Ministry of Social Affairs to organize and implement the national steering committee of Palestine Festival of Creativity organized during the Disabled Day. The committee is headed by Mrs. Majida Masri, Minister of Social Affairs. Other members include; Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Youth & Sports, Qader, Al Ryada for Media, YMCA, etc. SHS was one of the main financial supporters of the festival which came as a celebration of a series of competitions. The competitions were for a period of two months on sports, music, arts, etc. Most talented participants were awarded during the festival; SHS financially supported the awards to ensure the recognition of talented women with disabilities.



Mrs. Majida Masri handing gifts for pwds. Members of SHS participated in the Festival as Artist.

Ministry of Culture Affairs/ Annual Newsletter

SHS is a participant of the annual newsletter of the Ministry of Culture Affairs produced in cooperation with the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics. The idea of the newsletter is to outline cultural activities in Palestine during 2010. SHS uses this as an opportunity to spot light on participation of women with disabilities in the cultural life of Palestine.

Al Quds Educational TV

SHS members and focal points in cooperation with a local Educational TV have organized thirteen TV episodes on people with disabilities with focus on success stories. The objective was to raise awareness of the Palestinian local community about the positive energies of people with disabilities.

Media Coverage

SHS and activities were covered in more than one MEDIA medium through articles, interviews, reports and press releases such as, Alquds newspaper, Alhayat newspaper, Alayyam newspaper, Alsafeer Journal, Radio Ajyal,



Palestine TV, Russia Today Satellite Channel, Alquds Educational TV, MAAN, PNN, Al Salam TV, etc

- http://Akhawat.islamway.com/forum/uploads/monthly_02_2010/post-121126-1266946184.gif

- http://arabic.pnn.ps/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=74408&itemid=156

- <http://www.al-ayyam.ps/znews/site/template/article.aspx?did=155340&date=12/15/2010>

- http://arabic.rt.com/news_all_features/45185/

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Ministry of Transport

Attempting to facilitate the transport forms of wwds,SHS organized a meeting with the Minister of Transport, Director of Public Transport Unit and Director of Gender Unit at the Ministry of Transport to discuss the difficulties facing women with disabilities in public transportation. At the meeting, SHS learned about an assessment done by the ministry a few months ago on difficulties facing women in using public transport , unfortunately, as usual women with disabilities were not included. SHS argued with the Director of Gender Unit on the importance of including WWDs and encouraged the ministry to include them in the future. Agreement was made to brainstorm on strategies to help WWDs report abuses of public transport and on proposing solutions to making public vans accessible.



Accessibility of Roads at Halhul, Hebron

As a need to continue local efforts to make public streets accessible, SHS has contacted the municipality of Halhul (a village north to Hebron) to make the main road of the village accessible after a request letter of help from one of our focal points with physical disability who lives in this village. We are still working on a positive response from the municipality to help in drafting the bid announcements. Such efforts are time-consuming but their end-results are of great impact. A good example would be the street we advocated the government to pave in Askaka last year, which is currently used as a good practice to encourage other local village councils and municipalities.



The street of Skaka after the pavement was done, we're looking forward for the same to happen in Halhoul.

Dimensions/ Diakonia

In order to enhance on financial and audit terminology and responsibilities, SHS Project Manager, Accountant and Administrative and Financial Officer, as well as Auditor attended a training organized by Diakonia in cooperation with Dimensions Consulting. The training focused on delivery of financial and audit reports according to signed contracts. Capacity of staff was successfully enhanced. Clearness was provided to the roles of the parties involved in developing budgets and financial reports.

The Annual Report of 2009

SHS published the 2009 Annual Report as a tool of raising the visibility of the organization, and raising awareness about WWDs. The 2009 Annual Report was distributed electronically (due to lack of budget) to local and international partners, and WWDs.

Check out the annual report of 2009 at: <http://starsofhope.org/files/Stars%20of%20Hope%20Society%20-%202009%20annual%20report.pdf>

A success story:

Breaking the Barriers

Jawaher took her sit on the plane departing from Sana, Yemen to Amman, Jordan. She was one of the Yemen participant with disability selected to represent her country with Stars of hope. She was very excited. They reached at the hotel around 11:30 o'clock at night with the other participants of Yemen. She held the hand of her assistant for guide and headed for the elevator to the third floor, the first room beside the elevator. She didn't need to see to remember, she will never forget that place. While lying in bed, Jawaher closed her eyes in attempt to sleep, but her thoughts were too many not letting her sleep, she kept on reminding herself how the room felt under her hands. She turned right, then left, opened her eyes then closed it again, but nothing. She pressed the button on her watch and pulled it close to her ears, it was 3 o'clock in the morning...

The sun rose, it was 7 o'clock in the morning, Jawaher woke her assistant up and after one hour they were dressed and went downstairs for breakfast. Jawaher was still very shy. After she and her assistant got to the training room, the attendance sheet was distributed among the participants and Jawaher gave her sheet for her assistant to fill it up.

The training started as usual by talking about each other's life experience, and Jawaher said nothing as if she had no life experience at all, and so remained Jawaher silent for the rest of the day.

The second day I distributed the attendance sheet and since the assistants were not allowed to be present in the training room, Jawaher asked me to fill up her sheet, I suggested to hold her hand for her to fill it up herself, she did so with a bright smile on her face. The participants were distributed into groups and Jawaher would always let one of the participants talk on her behalf. Occasionally, she would raise her hand when the trainer asked a question but would lower it fast embarrassed that the trainer would see her. The day went by and again she said nothing.

The third and last day of the training came and the trainees were asked to compare the Yemenese law for people with disability to the UN law of people with disability. This time Jawaher raised her hand and waited, the trainer smiled and gave Jawaher the chance to speak, her cheeks became red and she spoke with very few words explaining that no law applied for universities. The trainer asked Jawaher if she had any experience on that field, in attempt to have her speak more, Jawaher took a long breath and began explaining slowly that her professor always insisted that her sister should write down her notes. The trainer wanted to hear more from Jawaher and asked about her reaction on her professor's insistence. Jawaher was speaking faster with less and less fear and embarrassment, she explained that she and her sister would do the same work and her sister would do it wrong while she would make it right, but unfortunately the professor never believed that she was the one who was right... The discussion went on for more than 8 minutes, and at the

end of the training, Jawaher came to me and told me she hadn't filled the attendance sheet for that day... I smiled.

Jawaher knew that this training was the beginning of a new life to her... "Even the rain starts with very small drops and many of us are like the rain."

Achievements:

About 500 wwds received our services and participated in our activities in five Arab countries; Palestine, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Yemen for the past 12 months.

Other quantitative indicators of the achieved goals summarized from the feedback of women with disability are:

- ✓ **More than half** of the women with disability who participated in our activities started to get out of their homes after joining our activities
 - ✓ We gained more than 100 new members for the past 12 months.
 - ✓ Technical and practical knowledge was developed for about **500 women with disability in five Arab countries..**
 - ✓ There are an increasing number of women with disability who are now aware of the Palestinian Law for People with Disability, the UN Convention for the Rights of People with Disability and other international conventions.
 - ✓ Networking and coalition were built among a **considerable number of women with disability**, on the local and regional levels.
 - ✓ **More people and organizations** are now aware of SHS and issues of concern to women with disability.
 - ✓ Women with disability compose **more than eighty percent** of SHS staff; working from the field to empower more women with disability.
 - ✓ Most of the new participants were women who were not used to leaving home for any activity.
 - ✓ Evaluation questionnaires of the activities contained suggestions for future programs, which show the commitment of the participants, as well as their willingness to continue with the SHS.
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- We financially supported wwds to provide for health care, education and assistive devices.
 - More than half of the girls who participated in the Peer Support sessions are now able to talk about their disabilities and concerns.
 - More than 150 girls with disabilities participated in our local and regional trainings.
 - Around 220 people representatives of all types of organizations, ngos and governmental organizations were interested and attended the first national conference on the employment of wwds organized by us.

Our future plans:

- Among our many trainings and activities of this year, we will be:
- Providing for the production of brochures about the accessibility of universities, so girls with disabilities will be aware of which university fulfills their disability needs. The brochures will be printed in Braille for girls with visual disabilities. We will also make workshop to present the activities and the

grants we've presented for the universities. PWDS in particularly WWDS, and all interested parties will be invited for this workshop.

- Peer support: We will be holding more peer support sessions for new girls with disability all over the West Bank
- The 4th cycle of the future leaders program: SHS in coordination with a training center will be calling for the 4th cycle of the Future Leaders Program later on this year. We will be announcing for the target groups on newspapers, radios and sending sms to members that haven't had the chance to participate on this training before.
- Organization trainings: SHS will be training some chosen rehabilitation centers on topics around gender and disability.

Announcements:

Our doors are open for new members on the age of 18 to 45. We encourage any woman with disability to come and join us. We currently have no openings but we always check on resumes in case any openings come up.

Visit us in our web site for more information on our documentations and activities:

www.starsofhope.org