



Annual Report

Stars of Hope Society for the Empowerment of WWD



Stars of Hope Society for the Empowerment of WWD
Palestine - Ramallah

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There is no greater disability in society, than the inability to see a person as more

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1. Overview

In Palestine, many persons with disabilities are denied their basic rights by default; they are frequently severely marginalized and commonly live in extreme poverty, a situation that creates a fertile environment for abuse, ill treatment, and violations, and renders persons with disabilities extremely vulnerable. According to the latest survey conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) in 2011, persons with disabilities constitute 7 percent of the Palestinian population. However, it is believed that the collected data are an underestimate of the actual percentage. Many families fear social stigmatization and do not register family members as persons with a disability in civil-status records; thus many of them continue to live an invisible life, as if they do not exist, a situation that especially applies to girls and women. The Ministry of Health, on the other hand, applies a very restrictive definition of disability that relates to the minimal services it provides and the minimal compensation that is being paid. This phenomenon is illustrated, for example, by the fact that statistics gathered by the Ministry of Health in July 2014, indicate that there are 113,000 persons with disabilities in Palestine, a number which is less than half the number reported by the PCBS in 2011. This discrepancy in figures is due to the approach that each entity uses: whereas the Ministry of Health applies a medical approach to disability, restricting it to the services it can provide in terms of actual services and financial compensation, the PCBS addresses it from a rights-based approach, which is definitely more accurate.

An excessive number of persons with disabilities are denied their basic rights: education (they are excluded from the general school system since schools are not equipped to handle the minimum accessibility requirements for most types of disabilities); employment; living independently in the community (which applies more rigidly to women as they face the cultural taboo that dictates that – whether disabled or not – women must live with either a husband or male relatives); freedom of movement (in most cases, the buildings and transportation systems in cities and villages are inaccessible); voting; participating in sports and cultural activities; enjoying social protection; accessing justice; choosing medical treatment (families of persons with disabilities are usually responsible for making such decisions); and entering freely into legal commitments (their families may impose such commitments on PwD and make decisions on their behalf with regard to an inheritance, for example, or to buying and selling property, thus violating their legal rights



in broad daylight). Impediments may include, but are not limited to, the lack of awareness about disability needs and disability rights to education, employment, and legal representation, both among the disabled persons themselves and among their caretakers and the general public. There is a general lack of specialized health-care services, financial resources, sufficient and/or accurate data on disability, and efficient and effective policies and legislations to protect them. Poor implementation of existing legislation and policies can also constitute an impediment. According to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, 34 percent of persons with disabilities are hindered by their inaccessible environment, 22 percent have had to drop out of school due to several barriers and obstacles, and 75 percent do not have access to public services.

However, a major achievement of the Palestinian disability movement was passage of the 1999 Disability Law, though its lack of implementation remains a main problem where consecutive Palestinian governments have had neither the political will nor the courage to start translating the articles of the law into real practical steps or to apply them at the policy level through all ministries.

The signing and ratification of the 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) by the Palestinian Authority in 2014 is a great prospect for advocacy, for bridging the inequality gap and making effective change that affects the lives of these girls and women. However, the way forward is to implement nationally the human rights principles of this convention and other human rights treaties such as the 1979 Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and to challenge change in society through a bottom-down approach, engaging women with disabilities and empowering them to lead the social and institutional changes they require to be free and equal citizens in their countries.



Aims and Objectives:

We seek to ensure opportunities in all walks of life for all women with disabilities. In this we aim to increase awareness of, and address issues faced by, women with disabilities in the community. It links women with disabilities from around Palestine, providing opportunities to identify and discuss issues of common concern. The objectives of the organization include

- To develop a network of women with disabilities throughout Palestine, to work together for their mutual benefit.
- To advocate for every woman with a disability to have the opportunity for true involvement in all levels of society.
- To develop leadership and the sharing of responsibilities to enable women with disabilities to take their place in whatever section of society they choose.
- To change social attitudes, practices, and power relationships which discriminate against women with disabilities.
- To lobby for the implementation of procedures and enactment of legislation this will advance and benefit all women with disabilities and combat sexism.
- To inform and educate the public with a view to advancing the opportunities for women in the political, creative, civil and social fields.
- To improve the functional and medical status of women with disabilities through guidance and support.

2. About Stars of Hope Society

"Stars of Hope Society" is a lead organization for women with all types of disabilities in Palestine. It is made up of women with disabilities. It is a woman centered organization which works on a collective model. This means that decisions are made using a consensus approach. The national office is located in Ramallah. Our organization is run by women with disabilities, for women with disabilities. It is the only organization of its kind in Palestine and one of a very small number internationally. SHS is inclusive and does not discriminate against any disability.

Women with disabilities in Palestine and region face a double set of prejudices and discrimination, based on both gender and disability. Their communities often label them as childlike, dependent, incompetent and asexual. Moreover, the community undermines their ability to have a job, to be a mother or a sexual partner. As a result, they are left confused as to who they are and what they are capable of. 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.

As a reference organization for women with disabilities, SHS gathered their common purposes and needs in a Strategic Plan. They defined activities to empower and support the target group, a previous measure to reinforce their collective demands. Through such activities and programs, women with disabilities have the opportunity to play a leading role in their own lives. They can face challenges and affect decision makers as well as decide how to improve their status in Palestine today and the region .

Our Vision:

Equal rights and opportunities for women with disabilities

Our Mission:

Our mission is to improve the lives and life chances of women with disabilities. This will be achieved by:

- 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.
- 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.

Some quotes of the women benefitted from the Job Creation programs....

"This job has allowed me to leave my shell and get rid of the sense of loneliness and isolation I endured for longtime".

"I was able to save some money and finally succeeded to register into university"

"I consider this work opportunity as my exit gate to the outer world".

"I used to feel like I am a burden on my parents and now for the first time in my life I can taste the feeling of being a contributor as everybody else"



3. Activities and Achievements

3.1 Job Creation and Employment:

As part of Stars of Hope's endeavors to economically empower the women with disabilities (WwDs), fifty eight **(58)** women were provided with short term (three months) employment opportunities in civil society organizations, ministries and other governmental entities. The main objective behind this activity is to allow the employed women to be socially integrated, financially independent and psychologically relieved. Due to interacting with WwDs, the employing agencies became more aware of the capabilities of WwDs and started to pay significant efforts to mainstream them into their activities and strategies. Prior to the job placement, technical needs assessment was performed to make sure the workplaces are accessible to the WwDs and perform any required environmental adaptation and/or provide any accessibility devices.

3.2 Training and Capacity Building:

- 3.2.1 Training on Gender, RBA to WwDs & DPO members in WB and Gaza :** Two (2) training courses were conducted about Advocacy Based on Gender, 3 day long training one in Gaza and one in WB. Twenty (20) WwDs from different area of Gaza strip with various types of disabilities have participated to the training, while twenty (20) women and one (1) man with various types of disabilities from remote areas affected by the wall in WB have participated to the training. The training focused on presenting the concept of gender sensitivity, gender issues, gender roles and stereotypes, myths and misconceptions about the roles and needs of women. Throughout the training, participants learned how to choose the advocacy issues, use of different models to analysis it, and know their roots and understand in depth. Participants learned how to plan for the preparation of initiatives reflect their needs and how designing their activities and to prepare for implementation through their work with each other.
- 3.2.2 Peer to Peer support to WwDs in WB and Gaza:** Four (4) Peer to Peer support meetings were conducted among 16 WwDs from various areas of Gaza strip and 14 WwDs from the WB via video conference. The main objective behind this activity was to break barriers and fears that face WwDs and provide a space for them to share experiences and knowledge with others. Different topics have been discussed and raised during the sessions such as the right to education for WwDs, the right to employment, the environmental adaptations, accessibility and the right to sports. These peer to peer activities have succeeded to raise the self- esteem of the WwDs , helped them to address the challenges they face due to their disability , accept their disability and to claim their own rights.

“Now I can leave this world with peace of mind.....”.

These were the words of Wrood's mum. Worood was a very shy young lady, who kept her-self caged in her house due to her disability. She was drawn into despair and loneliness and constantly refused to socialize with friends or relatives. However, after participating to the training and capacity building programs provided by Stars of Hope, Worood has blossomed into a flying butterfly. Now Worood attends all the training activities and is a fierce warrior who strongly advocate for herself and her peers on all fronts.



- 3.2.3 Training on disability rights & mainstreaming to representatives of women's organization:** Stars of Hope implemented a two days training to representatives of nine (9) women organizations, 3 from Gaza and 6 from WB. The training focused on disability and in how to support mainstreaming disability within their organizations. A total of 15 women participated to the training sessions and increased their awareness on the concepts of disability and mainstreaming, and got introduced to the wide range of limitations that face the WwDs in all facets of the daily life.
- 3.2.4 Coaching of women's organisations on disability rights & mainstreaming:** Following to the training on Disability Rights & Mainstreaming, the trainees were divided into groups and representatives from each organization presented their organizations' efforts to integrate and mainstream disability into the work place. A Call for proposal was announced during the training by Stars of Hope team and several action plans were submitted by the participating organizations. The objectives behind this CFP are to support the disability integration and further mainstream the PwDs in the work-places. Along with the CFPs, requests of technical assessment were created in order to adapt the work-places in which to be accessible for PwDs.
- 3.2.5 Training on inclusive approach methodology to representatives of women's organization:** Stars of Hope, in cooperation with the Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC), identified ten (10) main partners working for women organizations in the WB to participate to the training program. The targeted partners received training on the importance of promoting empowerment and protection of PwDs, and WwDs in particular. The participants demonstrated willingness to adhere to the principles of the inclusive approach methodology and shall address gender issues in their strategic objectives. The training program was divided into two training days and targeted twenty (20) persons form the executive and field staff.
- 3.2.6 TOT training in advocacy to PwDs:** Stars of Hope targeted twenty (20) PwDs in general and WwDs in particular, in order to increase their awareness on their working rights and improving working conditions. The training program focused on developing sustainable technical capacities among PWD's by developing a pool of expertise at local level on disability rights and the implementation of effective advocacy and sensitization activities.
- 3.2.7 Training in Project Cycle Management to DPOs:** The training was a complementary activity focused on providing the DPOs with the Project Cycle Management technical skills and facilitate their access to fund opportunities particularly in the field of advocacy. The aim of such training is to empower the WwDs and DPOs to promote for their rights and raise the awareness among Palestinian society.



نجوم الأمل تسلط الضوء على
أهمية دمج ذوي الإعاقة في
المدارس

3.3 Advocacy Campaigns:

- ✓ **Regional advocacy campaigns:** Stars of Hope implemented four (4) joint advocacy initiatives in Jordan, Egypt and Palestine in partnership with local NGOs. These initiatives took place along the years 2014 and 2015, however the initiative in Jordan had concluded in 2014. These initiatives consisted of a wide range of advocacy activities and tools such as: Radio interviews and programs; workshops; lobbying meetings with decision makers; round-table discussions; TV and radio spots, social media promos; TV reports and reportages; press and media coverage; e-newsletters; and training programs. These campaigns included:
 - ✓ *My Right campaign:* was implemented in Palestine in partnership with Thalassaemia Patient Friends' society (TPFS).
 - ✓ *We Share the Same Image campaign:* was implemented in Aswan- Egypt in partnership with the national coordination committee of Egypt
 - ✓ *My Voice Counts campaign:* was implemented in Aswan- Egypt in partnership with Homat Al Salam Society

3.3.1 National advocacy campaigns: These national advocacy initiatives were part of a sponsored practical training program provided by Stars of Hope to several civil society organizations in which the trainees could reflect and practice the skills and knowledge they received during the different trainings. The ultimate goal of such initiatives was to promote the rights of PwDs and WwDs in particular and to create an inclusive healthy environment for this important social segment.

These initiatives consisted of a wide range of advocacy activities and tools *such as:* position paper; solidarity protests; roundtable discussions; sign language training; workshops; psycho-social support sessions; open days; a fact sheet; posters; and social media. These campaigns included:

- ✓ *Bridges Rights campaign:* was implemented by Stars of Hope in Gaza and WB by a group of trained WwDs to celebrate the International Disabled Day.
- ✓ *By Our Hand We Make Future campaign:* was implemented by Aisha association in Gaza Strip
- ✓ *Me and You Together campaign:* was implemented by Women Affairs center in Gaza strip
- ✓ *General advocacy campaign:* was implemented by the Palestinian Center for Peace and Democracy in the WB.



3.4 Workshops:

3.4.1 Regional Dissemination workshop: is a regional workshop organized by Stars of Hope to conclude the “Our Voice Counts” project in Jordan-Dead Sea. The purpose behind this workshop is to discuss the conclusions and learned lessons of the project in which to improve coordination and interaction among the project’s partners and stakeholders in the three countries (Jordan, Palestine and Egypt). The workshop provided a platform for the participants to exchange experiences and disseminate the knowledge products of the project. This workshop has provided an outstanding opportunity for DPOs and WwDs to raise their voice and convey their urging demands and recommendations to higher levels either to the CSOs, governments or international entities functioning in the region.

3.4.2 Decent Work and Social Protection (DWSP) workshop: In partnership with Palestinian NGOs Network (PNGO), Stars of Hope implemented a workshop to promote Decent Work and Social Protection (DWSP) for people with disabilities. During the workshop prolonged discussions focussed on the urge need to embrace the ILO strategy in which to give opportunities to people while at the same time empowering and protecting the most vulnerable ones. A number of proposed suggestions focused on creating employment opportunities for PwDs; empowering social partners and other stakeholders through social dialogue; and improving social protection (including social security, wages and conditions of work).

3.4.3 Right to Decent Work for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) workshop: Stars of Hope in cooperation with & support of a number of allied CSOs conducted a big national workshop about the same topic but targeting different audience. 55 representatives from different organizations; humanitarian organizations, DPOs, CSOs, NGOs, media agencies, ministries, and local authorities attended the workshop. The main objective behind this workshop was to shed the light on the policies and initiatives of relevance to the rights of PwDs, with a particular focus on employment and work. One of the main issues discussed during the workshop was the very fragile compliance by governmental and non-governmental institutions to Palestinian law on disability (4/99) which binds all institutions to employ at least 5% of its staff from among the persons with disability.

3.4.4 Rights of Women with Disabilities (WwDs) workshop: Stars of Hope executed a workshop with policy makers in the health sectors to discuss the challenges that face PwDs in general and WwDs in particular to access the health services. The purpose behind this event was to find practical solutions and built action plans to facilitate the access of PwDs to all the healthcare premises and services.

3.5 Lobbying and Networking:



3.5.1 Coalition formulation: Stars of Hope participated to the establishment of a non official network / coalition composed of 5 CSOs in cooperation with the employment services department at the Ministry of Labour (MOL). The main goal of this coalition is to work hand in hand to support and claim the rights of the most marginalized and vulnerable groups in society. The coalition's members along with other DPOs and in cooperation with the employment services department at MOL agreed to implement an advocacy camping "knock the doors" during 2016 aims to activate the implementation of the 5% and alter the current enforcement mechanisms.

3.5.2 Lobbying meeting with officials in the Ministry of Health: Stars of Hope conducted lobbying meeting with institutional stakeholders and policy makers in the health sector to promote WwDs rights. The meeting aimed to bring attention to the issue of disability, requesting the adoption of inclusive policies and demanding respect for the rights guaranteed by the Palestinian law on disability (4/99). This meeting was a sequent step towards fulfilling the recommendations of the previous grand workshop "Rights of Women with Disabilities (WwDs). However, this meeting concentrated on building the operational action plan to facilitate the access of PwDs to all the healthcare premises and services.

3.5.3 Affiliations and memberships: Stars of Hope is a member of different coalitions and committees in both Gaza strip and WB:

- ✓ The Regional Steering Committee of Solider Project: which includes members from 8 countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia);
- ✓ Raise Your Voice Forum for PwDs;
- ✓ The steering committee of the Higher Council of Disability headed by the Ministry of Social Affairs;
- ✓ The Drafting Committee of the Disabled Card ;
- ✓ Oxfam funded coalition of women sector and disability sector which focuses on WwDs needs in wars and disasters.

"I am only one, but I am still one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything I will not refuse to do the something that I can do".

Helen Keller

3.6 Studies and Publications:

3.6.1 Training toolkit on political processes, disability rights, gender and leadership: Stars of Hope developed a toolkit on political processes, disability rights, gender and leadership. This toolkit was produced to capacitate WwDs and DPOs in all aspects of political participation in which to become better informed about public policy and advocate for their needs and rights. This tool was the first of its kind in the three countries where Stars of Hope operates (Palestine, Jordan and Egypt) and was utilized in the different training programs implemented regionally and nationally.

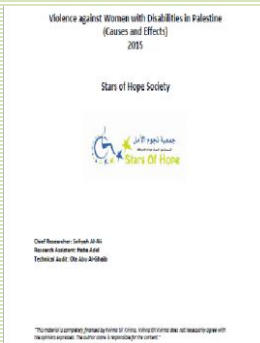
3.6.2 Country-specific fact sheets: Stars of Hope developed country-specific fact sheets on political structures, mechanisms and processes, legislative processes and civic engagement. The factsheet was produced in both electoral and non-electoral versions, covering the previous topics in Palestine, Egypt and Jordan. The documents were produced in 2014, and disseminated regionally and nationally in 2015.



3.6.3 Guideline on the effective use of social media and ICT: Stars of Hope developed a guideline and analytical tool on the effective use of social media, ICT and online social media by technical experts in cooperation with WwDs and DPOs in Palestine, Egypt and Jordan. Ongoing coaching in terms of social media and ICT development was provided to the WwDs and their organizations nationally and regionally.

3.6.4 Good practice reports: Stars of Hope produced a Good Practice report consolidated the experiences and lessons learned from implementing a project titled "Our Voice Counts" which was funded by UN Women. The report was disseminated at national and regional level to provide the basis for further scaling up of the project's approach and providing information for regional CS networks and political institutions.





Stars of Hope has succeeded through its projects and activities to provide some WwDs with a number of assistive tools and devices as follows:

- ✓ Eyeglasses – 2 units
- ✓ Medical Headset – 6 units
- ✓ Bath chair – 1 unit
- ✓ Crutches – 2 units
- ✓ Medical air mattress – 1 unit
- ✓ Wheelchairs – 2 units
- ✓ Foot Medical device – 2 units
- ✓ Adaptation of stairs rails

3.6.5 Position papers: Stars of Hope developed three position papers on the advancement of the political participation of WwDs and presented them to policy makers by national coordination committees in Palestine, Jordan and Egypt. The position paper is the introductory paper briefly reflects the committees' opinions and the status quo of the political participation of women with disabilities as well as the actions and priorities needed to fulfill the proposed recommendations.

3.6.6 Policy paper: Stars of hope in partnership with allied DPOs and CSOs developed a policy paper titled "Translation of employment policies of PwDs in Palestine during 2016 – by accessible employment opportunities". The policy paper has explained the situation of PwDs in Palestine and the legislative framework governing the right of persons with disabilities to decent work. Also it included an action plan draft for 2016 about the procedures and measures needed to remove the obstacles facing PwDs to access the work market.

3.6.7 A study about "Violence Against WwDs in the WB" : This study has shed the light on one of the most marginalized groups of the Palestinian Community; WwDs. This study examines the causes and consequences of violence against WwDs in an attempt to display the role that the government and the women organizations play in mitigating this violence, as well as its effect on both women and the community. Stars of Hop was invited to present a short briefing about the study to the Committee of Gender Experts of UN Women and UNDP from the Rule of Law joint programme. The study was produced in Arabic and will be translated to English in 2016.

3.6.8 A paper about "The extent of the Integration and Involvement of WwDs in CSOs in Gaza": The paper aimed to identify the extent of the involvement of women with disabilities in local institutions in the Gaza Strip. The paper concluded that there was a noticeable effort paid towards integrating the WwDs into the CSOs' programs and services, however the recruitment rates of WwDs were below the aspired target.

"To promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity."

Article 1 of the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Links:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Our-Voice-Counts-على-مشروع-صوتك/611577132271542>

<http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMjLttHGGuHGo6243QzoCm5A>

<https://twitter.com/ourvoicecounts1>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BAmJq9pbuc&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moQi1TYuptM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XABGRf6UdS8>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1PrmMzkuY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5BAmJq9pbuc&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T1v0p1xNnT4&feature=youtu.be>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xxv1aCtOKKs&feature=youtu.be>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1EjIw1G1fc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FSAERUu0XCy>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVeS_DNvGVw

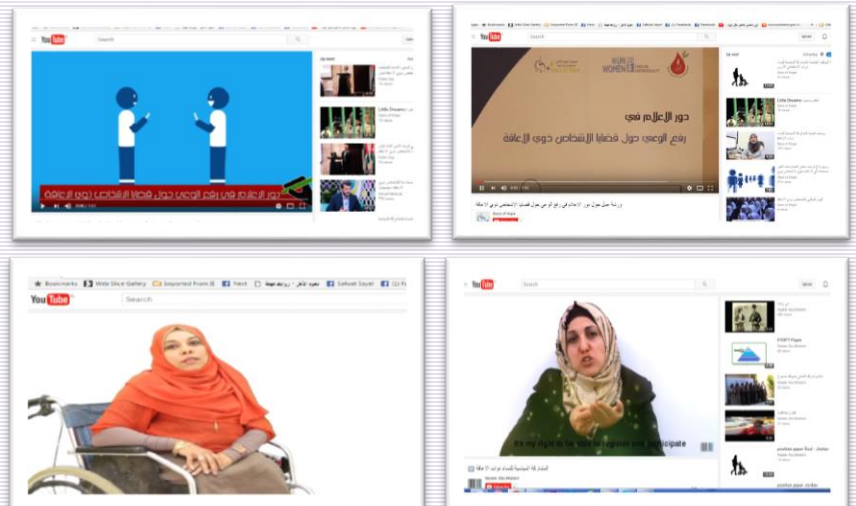
3.7 Media

3.7.1 Building social media websites and platforms: Stars of Hope provided ongoing coaching and technical guidance on the use of social media and ICT for WwDs and their organizations in Jordan , Egypt, Palestine. This action was accomplished on 2014 and 2015.



3.7.2 Production of TV spots :

8 TV spots were produced within the framework of the regional advocacy initiatives





3.8 Implemented Projects:

3.8.1 Internship for women with disabilities: Is a project implemented by Stars of Hope in the WB and is funded by Diakonie Austria. The overall objective of the project is creating internships for Women with Disabilities (WwDs) within a variety range of organizations to produce role models and mentors, and to raise awareness of the Palestinian civil society organizations of the abilities of women with disabilities, and to start mainstreaming them into their organizations.

3.8.2 Promotion of Women with Disabilities Equal Rights & Opportunities within the Palestinian community: Is a project implemented by Stars of Hope in the WB and Gaza Strip and is funded by The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation. The overall objective of the proposed program is for women with disabilities (WwDs) in Palestine to enjoy equal opportunities and their human rights. The achievement of this overall objective would have an impact on the social, economic and political aspects and challenges.

3.8.3 Our Voice Counts: Is a project implemented by Stars of Hope as a lead partner in Palestine, Jordan and Egypt and is funded by UN Women. This project aims at enhancing participation and engagement of women with disabilities in public and political structures and processes at national and local levels in the oPt, Egypt and Jordan.

3.8.4 Active participation and social inclusion of people with disabilities in Palestine through the empowerment of local DPOs : is a project implemented in the WB by Stars of Hope as a Co- partner with the EducAid and is jointly funded by the Italian Development cooperation and the European Commission EC. The project has been designed to contribute directly to reinforce the role, and recognition among policy makers, of DPOs in the OPT as active stakeholders who represents the needs of PWDs for prompting the active participation of WWDs in Palestinian Society in coherence with the UN conventions (CEDAW and CRPD).

3.8.5 Decent Work, Social Protection and Freedom of Association in the Middle East and North Africa: this project is implemented in Palestine by Stars of Hope as a Co- partner with the Solidar Foundation and is funded by the European Commission EC. The objective behind this action is to further strengthen and promote CSOs, social movements, representative and membership-based organizations and (independent) trade unions to take a leading role in reforms and democratic changes with regards to Decent Work, Social Protection and Freedom of Association in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia for their constituents. Also to develop the capacity and stimulate the participation of civil society in local, national and European decision making processes, related to ENP, and in particular monitor the progress made towards the objectives of the Action Plans and the Association Agendas between the EU and countries in the region.