About US

Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center (SMRC) is an institution of the Worldwide Moravian Church working in Palestine. It contributes in securing a life in dignity for persons with intellectual disability, through the provision of rehabilitation and training, integration and inclusion, awareness building and community mobilization, on the basis of love, dignity, justice and equality.

SMRC is located in a village called Abu Qash, in Ramallah and Al-Bireh District, West Bank, Palestine, 25 km to the north of Jerusalem. SMRC trains and rehabilitates around 192 persons with intellectual disability of all ages inside and outside the center. Thirty seven qualified staff members work with great commitment and pride in this special mission.

Vision

To be pioneers in securing a life in dignity for people with intellectual disabilities in Palestine

Values:

- Love
- Dignity
- Transparency
- Justice and equality
- Innovation and excellence.

Strategic Goals:

1. Provide distinctive rehabilitation and training services to persons with intellectual disability regardless of disability level in Ramallah and Al-Bireh District.
2. Raise the awareness of the Palestinian community including families, individuals, institutions and policy-makers on the rights and capacities of persons with intellectual disability.
3. Strive to change local and national policies in accordance with the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Palestinian Law through the Advocacy Committee and partners.
4. Reinforce cooperation and relations with local, Arab and international individuals and organizations in Palestine and abroad.

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A Word from the Director
Mrs. Ranya Karam

Fifteen months have passed since October 2017 when I joined Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center. These past months have left an impact on one of the most inspiring periods of my career, as well as on my personal life.

Having come from a non-rehabilitation background, I had had very little knowledge about what it means to be indulged in rehabilitation work, namely for People with Intellectual Disability. As a matter of fact I came to realize that – short of a dedicated work team, board of directors and donors who strongly advocate these people’s right to earn appropriate support, added to their belief in the ability of these people to learn and achieve, not much could be done. The longer I stayed serving a SMRC, the more I have felt this conviction in the heart and in the performance of SMRC team, their supporters and benefactors at the same time.

It is with this conviction that SMRC has been able to carry out so many achievements in 2018, the highlights of which I proudly share with you in this Newsletter.

Another worthy lesson I have learned during this period highlights the fact that nothing is more rewarding than seeing someone, whose life has not been fairly treated, smiling with happiness and pride.

During Christmas time I have asked the teachers to work with students to make handmade Christmas cards. To my surprise, one of our students knocked at my door saying that she carried a gift for me. She gave me a drawing, one of the best Christmas gifts I had ever received this year. It was indeed the most beautiful hand-drawn Christmas tree. Our student Fida handed me her drawing with a broad smile and lots of pride. A smile that assured me that SMRC mission has soundly been achieved.

Meeting with Local Community Institutions to Discuss Disability Issues

Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center has held a meeting session in February 2018 with 35 local community institutions and local councils in Birzeit area as a step to foster partnership and develop joint plans for organizing inclusive activities and making public places accessible for persons with disabilities. The participants have discussed disability issues and the necessity to mobilize and raise the awareness of the general public on such issues. The participants have recommended establishing a committee to develop a memorandum of understanding to set work mechanisms for facilitating the lives of persons with disabilities.

Participation of SMRC in the 9th Regional Games of Special Olympics in Abu Dhabi

Halimah Ladadweh a student from Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center and a member in the Palestinian Special Olympics Team has participated in the 9th Regional Games of Special Olympics which took place in Abu Dhabi in March 2018. She won 3 silver medals during her participation in Shot Put, 100m Sprinting and Relay Race.

Launching Ceremony of the Palestinian National Coalition for the Employment of Persons with Disability

The Palestinian National Coalition for the Employment of Persons with Disability has been launched in March 2018 through a press conference which was held at Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center. The founding institutions of this Coalition

Celebration of Mother’s Day

Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center has celebrated Mother’s Day in March 2018 in the presence of persons with disability, their parents, staff members and Rev. Niels Gärtner from the Moravian Church. The ceremony began with a word by the Head of Rehabilitation Programs Mrs. Abeer Hamad and Rev. Niels Gärtner who welcomed the honorable guests and praised their efforts and the efforts of SMRC in supporting persons with disability. A group of SMRC students has performed Dabkeh (traditional dance) in front of the audience. SMRC served the guests with some sweets and desserts and drinks.
have attended the press conference including the General Administration for Employment – Ministry of Labor, Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center, Stars of Hope, Thalassemia Patients' Friends Society, Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation, Young Men's Christian Association Jerusalem – Rehabilitation Program, Palestinian General Union of People with Disability and Al Ofoq Organization to develop the legal and administrative environment for the decent employment of persons with disability, increase the number of persons with disability in the labor market, improve the working conditions to meet the standards of decent employment.

Advocacy Committee Entertainment Activity
The Advocacy Committee for Persons with Disability has organized an entertainment activity in April 2018 to all members to commemorate the International Children’s Day under the slogan “The Right of Persons with Disability to Entertainment”. The Committee has invited the Bible Society to perform a theater show which aims to convey love and gender equality.

Visit of ADA Representative to SMRC
The Representative of the Austrian Development Agency Mrs. Andrea Schmid has visited Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center in March 2018 to learn more about the Vocational Training Program “VTP” on the ground, its services and activities for persons with intellectual disability. The visit has included a tour in VTP groups and a field visit to a factory in Birzeit to meet one of SMRC former students who is currently working at the facility. The Representative was remarkably impressed by the performance of SMRC and the dedication of personnel in providing services to persons with disability.

Celebration of Palm Sunday & Easter
SMRC has celebrated Palm Sunday and Easter in April 2018 in the presence of Rev. Imad Haddad. The ceremony started with carrying palm branches to the forest where Rev. Haddad has preached the resurrection story to SMRC students and staff. It ended with enjoying some sweets and egg hunting in the forest.

Graduation Ceremony of SMRC Students in Acrobatics
The Palestinian Circus School has graduated SMRC students in May 2018 at SMRC forest after receiving intensive trainings. SMRC students and trainers have performed an acrobatic show to all attendees including SMRC students, family members and staff. The Palestinian Circus School distributed certificates to all graduates.

Participation of SMRC in Special Olympics in Istanbul
Halimah Ladadweh a student from Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center and a member in the Palestinian Special Olympics Team has participated in the Special Olympics Games which took place in Istanbul in May 2018. She has participated in 100m sprinting.

SMRC Physical Improvements
Thanks to PalTel Communications Co, SMRC has managed to construct retaining walls at the entrance of SMRC in May 2018. Moreover, SMRC has constructed protective fences in SMRC forest to prevent trespassers from entering the facility and protect persons with intellectual disability from any potential harm.

SMRC Guesthouse
Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center has hosted several local and international institutions to carry out camps, workshops, retreats or even learn more about SMRC programs during summer. Others have come just to stay at SMRC guesthouse and enjoy the beauty of the surrounding forest and relaxing nature.
Development of the Physiotherapy Program
Thanks to the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center has managed to develop its physiotherapy program through purchasing around 20 items of physiotherapy and sport equipment in June 2018 to strengthen the muscles and tendons of persons with disabilities as well as improve their physical fitness and endurance.

Star Mountain’s Summer Camp
Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center has concluded a summer camp under the slogan “My Right to Learn and Enjoy” in July 2018. The Camp included different activities such as music, drama, handcrafts, science, environment, swimming and educational visits. Star Mountain Center shed the light on the importance of engaging volunteers in this Camp to change the negative attitudes of the youth towards persons with disability. Star Mountain would like to thank all institutions and companies which contributed to the success of this summer camp.

Star Mountain’s Student Trip to Murad Tourist Resort
Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center has organized an overnight trip for persons with intellectual disability in September 2018 to Murad Tourist Resort. During this trip participants enjoyed all sorts of fun activities. Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center would like to extend gratitude and thanks to the administration of Murad Tourist Resort for the good hospitality.

A Visit from Herrnhut Diakonie School for Persons with Intellectual Disability to SMRC
A group of 3 teachers from Herrnhut Diakonie School for Persons with Intellectual Disability has visited Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center in September 2018 to learn more about SMRC programs, exchange experience and knowledge with SMRC teachers and discuss their existing State Curriculum and learn what is applicable for SMRC rehabilitation programs. It has been agreed to plan and organize follow up visits to provide coaching and mentoring to SMRC teachers.

Signing Ceremony of Memorandums of Understanding with the Ministry of Local Government
Under the auspices of Dr. Husein Al-Araj the Minister of Local Government, Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center has signed memorandums of understandings in October 2018 to reinforce and include disability rights in all plans and programs of local governments in Birzeit area. This ceremony was concluded in the presence of Dr. Husein Al-Araj the Minister of Local Government, chairmen of local governments of Surda-Abu Qash, Attara, Birzeit, Kober, Al-Mazraa, Abu Shukhaidem, Jibea, Burham, Dora Al-Qari, Ein Sinia and Ifnna as well as civil society institutions like the Charity Association for Disabled Rehabilitation and Family Counseling. The Minister of Local Government, the Director of Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center Mrs. Ranya Karam and chairmen of local governments have signed all memorandums of understandings. During the Ceremony, a video spot on disability rights was presented. The ceremony was preceded by a tour for the Minister and guests in all SMRC programs to learn about services provided to persons with intellectual disability.
Meeting Between the Palestinian Disability Coalition and the Palestinian Ministry of Women Affairs

A delegation from Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center and the Palestinian Disability Coalition has held a meeting in October 2018 with the Minister of Women Affairs Her Highness Dr. Haifa Al-Agha to include women with disability in anti-violence policies and programs. The Director of Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center Mrs. Ranya Karam has spoken about the SMRC services and incidents of abuse against women with disability; particularly women with intellectual disability. Accordingly, the Minister has promised to address the following issues: 1. Reconsideration of Resolution No (9) 2011 of the Council of Ministers on protected shelters which excludes women with intellectual and physical disability from protected shelters. 2. Accessibility of protected shelters to host women with disability regardless of disability type and raise the awareness of personnel of protected shelters and service providers on disability rights and how to deal with persons with disabilities. 3. Discuss the topic of the protected shelter which was built in Nablus city for persons with disability with the Minister of Social Development Dr. Ibrahim Al-Sha’ir to specify services for abused women with disability.

Expansion of SMRC Agricultural Sector

Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center has expanded its organically cultivated land area to produce more vegetables that are free from chemical fertilizers and harmful substances to human beings to secure self-sufficiency of food for SMRC and provide healthy food for the general public.

Visit of the Redeemer Church to SMRC

As in every year the Redeemer Church in Jerusalem came to Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center in November 2018 to make more than 40 Christmas wreaths to be sold in the Christmas Bazaar which took place in the vicinity of the Redeemer Church.

Meeting Ceremony with Businessmen

The Palestinian National Coalition for the Employment of Persons with Disabilities has organized a meeting between businessmen and persons with disabilities in November 2018 to give persons with disabilities the opportunity to meet businessmen in an attempt to find employment opportunities for them.

Launching the Right to Protection Campaign

The Advocacy Committee for Persons with Disability has launched an advocacy campaign under the slogan “The Right to Protection” in December 2018. The campaign started with a protest at Al-Manara Square in Ramallah. Participants included persons with disability, their families, local community institutions and school students. The participants then marched to the Protestant Hall to attend a theater play. The campaign was concluded with presenting a position paper to the Palestinian Council of Ministers on the right of persons with disability to protection.

Expansion of SMRC Agricultural Sector
Evaluation of the Community Work Program

Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center has hired a consultant to conduct a mid-term evaluation of SMRC Community Work Program in December 2018 to help the centers’ leadership and program team examine the level of achievement, challenges and lessons learned since the start of the project in January 2017.

Capacity Building of SMRC Staff

Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center has developed the capacity of its staff members through offering them the opportunity to participate in different workshops including Human Sexuality, Portage Guide to Early Intervention, Child Abuse and Protection, Occupational Therapy, MOVE for Physical Therapy, Music, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
Advent Season & Christmas 2018

The Advent Season is a very special time at Star Mountain. We have celebrated the Advent on Monday mornings, in the presence of Rev. Imad Haddad. It involved a number of activities including singing, storytelling, playing, dancing, distribution of chocolates, and listening to Christmas songs. SMRC has made a Christmas party to bring joy and happiness to students. The party included a word from the Director Mrs. Ranya Karam, a performance of the nativity scene as well as dancing by SMRC student. SMRC also hosted the Hope Band to sing Christmas carols and songs. By the end of the party, Santa came to give Christmas presents to students.

Special Events for the next quarter

- SMRC will develop the capacity of its staff in Special Education, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Shadow Report.
- SMRC will conduct inclusive activities for its students in regular school in the local community.
- Two SMRC students will participate in the Special Olympics World Games in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Best wishes from Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Star Mountain Rehabilitation Center