

REPORT ON NABLUS VISIT MARCH 2010

On this visit I was asked to assist in the assessment of the children attending and training of staff working at the Farah Centre in Nablus City. This was another centre within Nablus City. This was after the completion of the support and training program at the Asker Camp Rehabilitation Centre in the last year. Linda our PCRf co-ordinator was my support and local guide.



In addition children in the community monitored by Palestinian Children's Relief Fund (PCRf) were assessed in two towns Qalqilya and Gameen accompanied by the staff of the Farah Centre.

This small but comprehensive children's rehabilitation service at the Farah centre has a range of medical and allied health staff that were enthusiastic and hardworking. It was a privilege and yes again another fulfilling clinical experience in Palestine.

I had the opportunity to offer to extend their skills base and facilitate a number of new treatment approaches and planning strategies for the team to consider. Treatment goal setting, review strategies, time frames etc were discussed. Management of tone during treatment and splinting and casting for high tone was discussed too.

Some primary concerns for the mothers of the children with disabilities other than mobility was the management of toileting, feeding and general management of severe tone. This was the case with the young children in the community too. Again we were able to look at wheelchair seating and were able to facilitate modifications to a few wheelchairs. Project funds from AFoPA with PCRf will fund these.



We are also exploring funding for the purchase of a rollator frame (mobility aid) for a child in the community and installation of a half step so she can mobilise outside in her garden independently in the town of Gameen.



I encountered some families with two siblings with disabilities. Having little formal respite and varying family supports they welcomed suggestions on positioning and advice on stimulation programs. This would facilitate easier management and quality time for parent and child.



One of the strategies that will be considered is a range of locally available aids that staff at the Farah Centre can either demonstrate or trial to enhance therapy outcomes. The therapists have had commenced basic training in adaptive seating for wheelchairs. Equipment has been provided and funds for covers will be from the project funds.

A number of programs are planned for the next visit. As the director has sought to formalise the connections between organisations AFoPA and PCRf, this will be discussed through Linda our indispensable and professional PCRf representative in Nablus before presentation to both organisation committees.



To end on a happy note one of my most uplifting encounters was with three 14 year olds attending the Asker Camp Girls School funded by UNRWA (United Nations Refugee Works Relief Agency). With the support of their teacher they developed an electronic 'white stick' for use by the visually impaired. It has a ground and vertical sensor that alerts through an auditory sensor its user to changes at ground level and ahead.

The Palestinian youth like ours in Australia and all over the world are our hope and their aspirations, achievements require acknowledgement.

Again I would like to acknowledge the financial support of Palestine Children's Relief Fund and Australian Friends of Palestine without whose support all of this would be challenging and easier said than done.

Merlin Nathan
Occupational Therapist