



# NEW PHASE OF REHABILITATION

SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2020



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## WE HAVE

- ✓ provided treatment to hundreds of children each year in our Child Rehabilitation Centre.
- ✓ integrated children with disabilities in our Inclusive School. Currently, 38 % of our roll are children with disabilities.
- ✓ empowered mothers in the treatment of their children
- ✓ treated children in villages and towns across the West Bank through our Outreach Program.
- ✓ Maintained high standards in all of our services.

## Introduction

The Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre (JPBC) has stood over the years to provide services for Palestinian children with disabilities since 1965. JPBC envisions for all Palestinian children with disabilities (CWD) to have increased access to quality health services and inclusive education.

JPBC is a member of the East Jerusalem Hospitals Network (EJHN) and one of the big four national rehabilitation centers in Palestine. It remains the main national referral Centre for children with disabilities by the Palestinian Ministry of Health, for Comprehensive Rehabilitation.

In 2018, the Child Rehabilitation Centre successfully passed the second audit of the Joint Commission for International Accreditation (JCIA); maintaining its record of high standard of quality service provision in the field of rehabilitation.



# Impact of Coronavirus

Life after Coronavirus will look nothing like life before it. On both an organizational and individual levels, people have gained new experiences that will change their perspective for the rest of history. Now we all stand, perhaps for the first time, on the same ground, seeking to protect our communities and develop humanitarian initiatives to ensure the safety of the earth and its people.

Organizations around the world are expressing huge concern about the far-reaching impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has directly affected life on a global scale. However, following a total lockdown, the institutions in many countries, are meeting and overcoming the challenges this unprecedented situation has brought.

Our health organizations, in particular, have been deeply affected. Many hospitals have faced a shortage of medical expertise, equipment and PPEs, others have reported a financial crisis and some have had to close their doors in response to government instructions.

## Our Response

JPBC was one of the organizations that had to close its doors for a while. However, the leadership quickly turned its attention to finding creative solutions to sustain services for our Palestinian children with disabilities in East Jerusalem, West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

This resulted in our Virtual Care Model, which was developed to reach our Palestinian children with disabilities to continue to provide them with their Comprehensive Rehabilitation treatment. It also enabled us to support families through the Mother and Family Empowerment Program.

Our General Director, Ibrahim Faltas says,

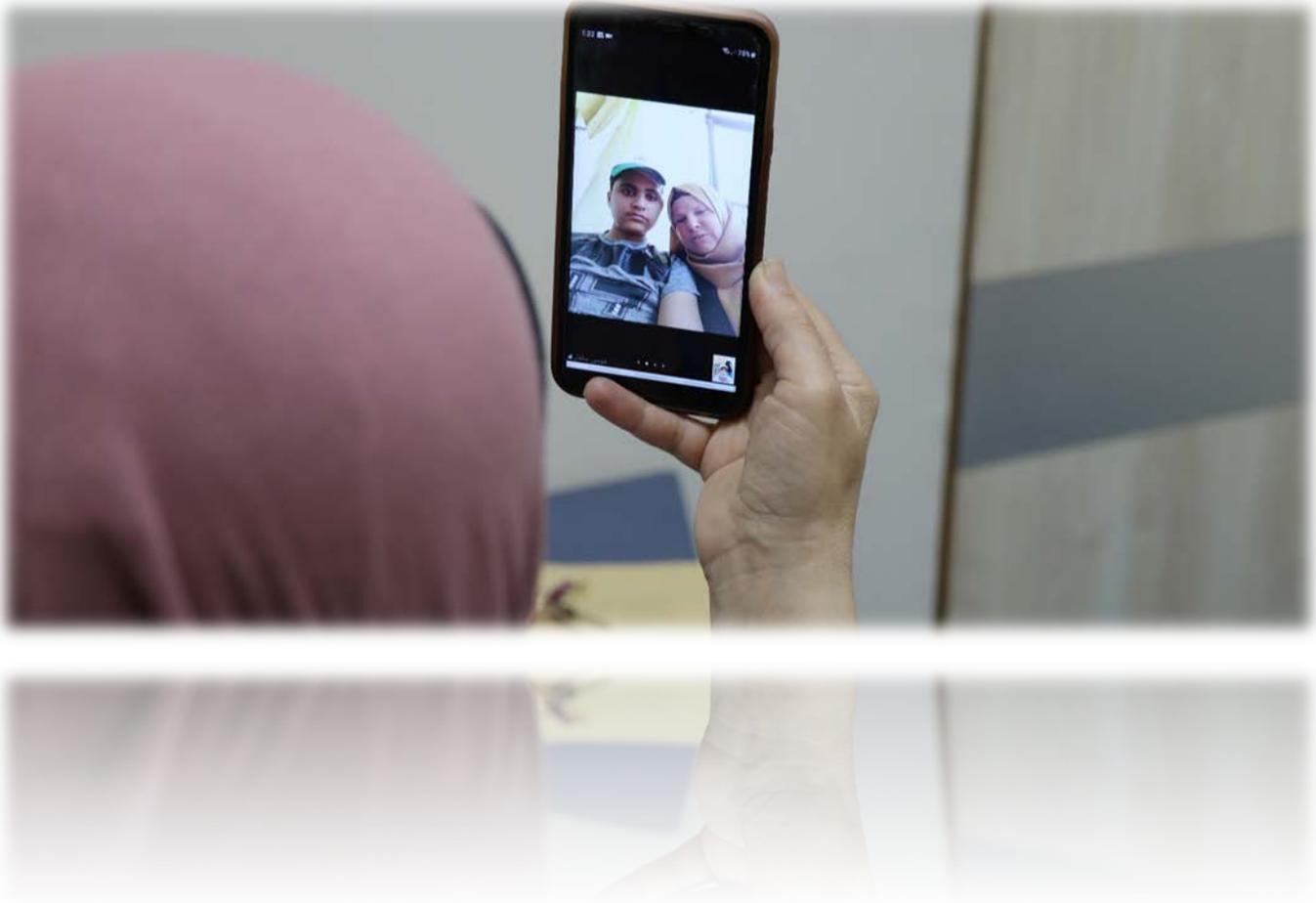
“This situation is new to all of us. However, we first piloted a program of support, then created this new Virtual Care Model. We continue to develop and refine our newest model of service provision.”

The Director of the Child Rehabilitation Centre, Violette Mubarak, explained that the team worked hard to assess who would most benefit from the Virtual Care Model. Parents were contacted and a unique individual therapy program was devised for each child as was the usual practice whilst ensuring that infection control training and psychosocial support were priorities.

In addition, our Medical Director Dr. Waddah Malhees, adds that:

“It is our role as a National Rehabilitation Centre for referrals, to assuage parents’ fears and continue providing our services to their children with disabilities. Our Virtual Care Model is compelling, since we already train the families to become ‘Shadow Therapists’ at our Centre through the Mother and Family Empowerment Program, so their interaction was flawless.”

Outreach program coordinator, Lucy Ghrayeb also applauded the success and smooth running of this model of therapy and adds that: “we continue to develop and improve this service”.



## Virtual Care Model- Statistics

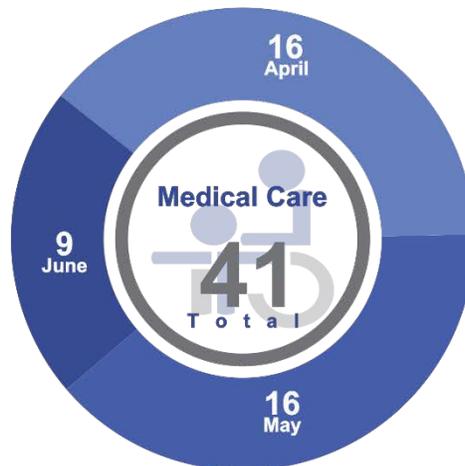
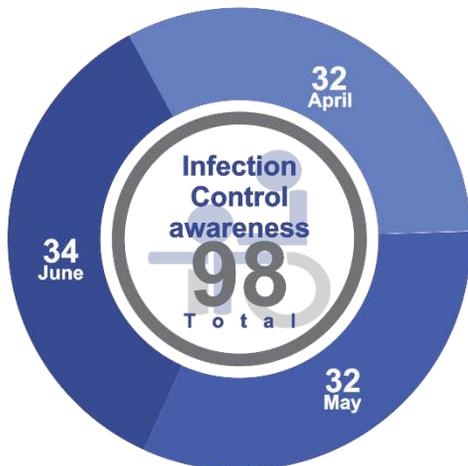
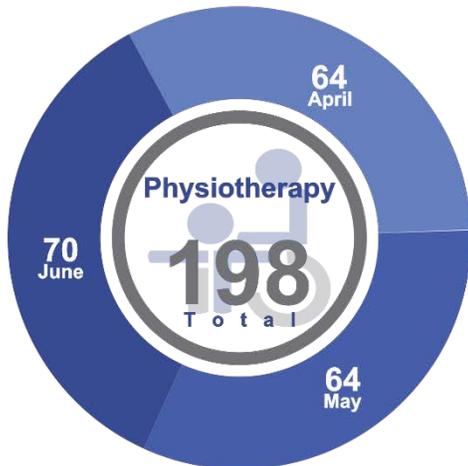
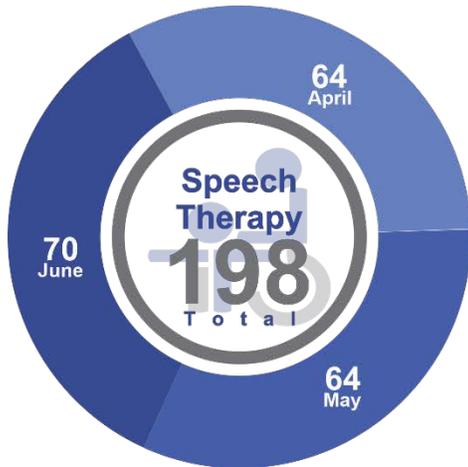
The Child Rehabilitation Centre's Medical Team includes the Medical Director, therapists, nurses and social workers and together they have, provided 835 virtual sessions for children with disabilities from West Bank over the past three months. These virtual sessions have included Speech Therapy, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Psychological Support, Infection Control awareness sessions and Medical Care.

In April, May and June, a total of 50 families from the West Bank joined the program, where they were provided with 835 different therapy sessions. 7 Families from East Jerusalem received 13 therapy sessions during April and May in the JPBC child development unit. The ages of the patients ranged between 18 months and 15 years. 31 of these were male and 26 were female.

It is worth noting that every family received a 40-minute Infection Control session by our Infection Control Officer, to raise their awareness about the virus and to offer them guidance about hygiene, self-care and protection. The social worker, also worked closely with the families given the psychological impact of quarantine on both children and parents.

# Virtual Care

## For children coming from the West Bank





## Farah's First Step Over the Webcam!

Farah's parents were expecting their fourth daughter after nine months of a healthy pregnancy and had selected a beautiful Arabic name to call her "Laila", meaning the night. She was born with Down's syndrome and when her father, Hakam held her in his hands, he decided to change her name to "Farah" which means joy!

Farah's mother, Rawya said that it took longer for her to come to terms with her daughter's diagnosis and didn't want to talk to anyone about it. Yet, after two months she was able to say, "Farah's father's decision to change her name was the right one. This name suits Farah much better

since she has become the joy of our life."

Farah has faced physical and mental challenges along the way. Her parents made their first steps towards securing support and treatment for Farah when she was six months.

They meet Dr. Waddah Malhees at the Medical Clinic in Jerusalem and Farah was referred to JPBC Child Rehabilitation Centre.

On her first admission, Farah was not able to sit up and control her arms, legs and neck. But after two weeks at the Centre, this greatly improved. After her second and the third admissions the medical team recorded improvements in her fine motor skills, balance, ability to chew and eat, and in her cognitive skills; she particularly enjoyed playing with Lego.

### First Step...

When everywhere was in 'lockdown', Farah's family were enrolled in the Virtual Care Model. Farah received four sessions of virtual therapy each week. Despite her indifference in the first virtual session she quickly adapted to the idea of 'rehabilitation over a distance'. To the delight and surprise of everyone, she took her first steps while the camera was filming in one of the therapy sessions.



She has now turned 18 months and is able to walk up and down the stairs. Her family is very grateful for the Virtual Care Model that helped their daughter to walk her first steps. Her mother says, “My daughter’s sense of cognition was activated through these online sessions, now she can walk, she speaks some words and her reactions are faster.”

### **Great relief and confidence**

Rawya, Farah’s mother refers to her own huge relief and the great confidence she has in the JPBC team: “At the beginning, it wasn’t easy for me but they supported me and my daughter until we could be independent”. She expresses the whole family’s confidence in Farah. “My uncles and relatives visit me much more now because they enjoy their time with Farah. They say that they come specially to see her.”

Rawya urges all parents of children with disabilities to focus on their children’s abilities and potential: “The last thought in my mind is that my daughter has a disability.

I’m a mother, empowering my child for a better future.”

She is now supporting many mothers of children with disabilities, motivating and educating them. “I read a lot about my daughter’s case and needs. Farah has elevated my knowledge onto a higher plain”.

**“The last thought in my mind is that my daughter has a disability. I’m a mother, empowering my child for a better future.”**

## Virtual Care

### A mini Rehabilitation Centre at home

Nadine (three years old), was referred to the Child Rehabilitation Centre at JPBC by our Medical Director Dr. Waddah Malhees, after she was diagnosed with developmental delay. She has since received intensive and comprehensive rehabilitation therapy over nine weeks during four admissions.

Jamal, Nadine's father, accompanied his wife and daughter, to most Sunday and Thursday sessions. He describes how he found these sessions most encouraging for both parents and children: "We as parents have learned a lot about our children's conditions and we are able to manage them and to provide support."

Previously Nadine relied on help from others for everything she wanted to do, but after her four admissions, she has shown great progress. Now, she can sit unsupported, is less reliant on others, and is able to walk and talk. Moreover, she has become more sociable and happy to interact with other people beyond her family circle.

Even after the lockdown and because of the spread of the Coronavirus, the JPBC team continued to deliver therapies to children online, through a Virtual Care model. In this way, Nadine received her therapy sessions at home through video-conferencing with her family fully participating, supporting and following the therapist's guidance, using every available resource.

Jamal explains, "Because of the Family Empowerment Program, in addition to the 'Home Therapy Plan', we have created a small simulation of the 'Princess Basma Rehabilitation Centre in our home, and we all work together to implement all the necessary exercises to support Nadine."



# Challenges and Opportunities

## Quarantine lessons

The Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre's administration and staff have risen to the challenge to continue to provide the opportunities for children with disabilities. The success of the Virtual Care Model has demonstrated the ability of our team to meet the challenges and to learn from these innovation and imagination.

### General Director, Ibrahim Faltas:

"This experience has clearly shown the importance of flexibility in work under different conditions. It also has proven the possibility of developing a Virtual Care Model which can reach a larger number of families of children with disabilities who are not able to travel daily to Jerusalem.

However, the lockdown had put us in a difficult financial situation, especially because the disability sector does not attract sufficient funding. And now we open our doors to our beneficiaries with higher costs, while we are committed to protection regulations set to us by the Ministry of Health and World Health Organization."



### Rehabilitation Centre Director, Violette Mubarak:

"We now are in a different stage of rehabilitation. We believe we can keep the Virtual Care Model as a complementary program for rehabilitation. However, we are still struggling financially, especially on account of our re-opening procedures. We have instructed a number of renovations to prevent any possible contagion, as well as having increased costs for more PPEs and protection equipment."



### Medical Director, Dr. Waddah Malhees:

"Reaching the children virtually in their home sittings is such a great opportunity for us to learn more about them. This new possibility has enabled us to make better assessments and evaluations. We have also benefited from being able to meet the whole family to create the Home Therapy Plan and ensure its accuracy."



**Occupational Therapist, Ghadeer Abu Obed:**

“The greatest benefit we received during these months, is the parent’s commitment. Working closely with them has given us the best opportunity to support them psychosocially. We also benefited from the presence of the fathers and siblings. We got the chance to empower the whole family to enable a better rehabilitation process for their children.



Despite the technical problems that we faced,

I have learned that nothing is impossible and that the rehabilitation can continue even over distance. This program was a chance for the families to find alternative resources and create affordable equipment for their children’s rehabilitation.”

**Social Worker, Nuha Abassi:**

“What surprised me the most was that our presence with the families really helped them to overcome family challenges, because I was able to support the families and follow up with them consistently. Their feedback was very positive.



In particular, mothers have appreciated my regular phone calls, always telling me how much they needed this chat and that they feel much better and abler to continue caring for their children now. I think we learned together to be more patient and committed.”

“THE FAMILIES ARE OUR HANDS AND OUR VOICE”

## WE ARE BACK!



After two months of a full lockdown and closure, we are now back at the Centre, providing our regular services for our beneficiaries. JPBC has applied new procedures and regulations to ensure children with disabilities and their families are admitted at our Centre safely.

Our Infection Control Officer, Raja'a Natsha, explains the new plan of receiving families and their children, which includes online awareness for the mothers about their responsibilities at the Centre and at home.

The new procedures include temperature testing when arriving and providing mothers with PPEs such as masks and hand sanitizers. Mothers are not allowed to enter any therapy session without a mask on their face and the social gathering is no longer allowed during the meals in the dormitory where the mothers are hosted in the inpatient program.

Specific renovation projects are already being implemented to provide a better level of privacy and protection and to ensure proper social distancing.

## The Outreach Program is Active Again

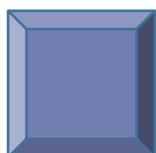
Our core value is to integrate children with disabilities into their families and communities and in order to do this, we need to be active within their community, especially because it is not easy for many families to travel to Jerusalem.

There are many reasons preventing Palestinian families from traveling with their children to Jerusalem, which would mean they lose their chance of assessment and treatment for their child.

Our multidisciplinary team has a very thorough infection prevention procedure while reaching families, assessing and treating their children.



A number of Outreach visits have now been made since the relaxation of the lockdown, providing assessments for the children and referring them either to JPBC Rehabilitation Centre or to other Palestinian health providers depending on their needs.

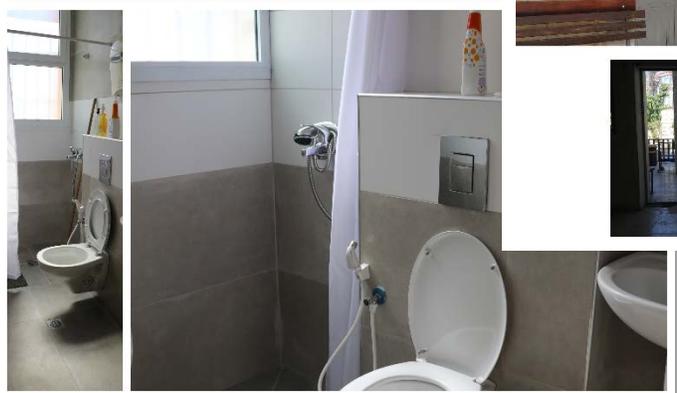


## Ongoing Projects

### Dormitory and entrance

In order to provide a higher level of privacy in the dormitory, and with a generous donation from the Government of Germany through its Development Bank (KfW) and implemented by UNDP's Program of Assistance to the Palestinian People (UNDP/PAPP), we are implementing a new renovation project that meets the safety guidelines after the COVID-19 pandemic. This renovation has created extra restrooms so that mothers and their children have individual and private access to these facilities, ensuring that infection control regulations are safely applied in the dormitory.

This project includes renovation to the main entrance that prevents social gathering around the entrance.







## Virtual Education

Our Inclusive School serves students from the geographic area of Jerusalem, and has on average 460 students; out of which 38% are children with a wide range of disabilities, such as physical disabilities, hearing impairment, visual impairment, Down Syndrome, ASD, ADHD, and learning difficulties.

The school also was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. However, we decided to carry on the educational journey virtually, even though the teachers and students did not have extensive experience in Virtual Education. The Ministry of Education published a plan and recommended software that we used efficiently.

Through this new experience and innovative approach, students and teachers have recorded very good progress. The students started to be more self-reliant and motivated to demonstrate their different skills, in addition to their academic skills. This program has also boosted their confidence.

At the same time, the teachers have shown great commitment and initiative. They learned new concepts despite the constant technical challenges and the lack of smart tablets and computers. The School's Principal, Bassma Kirresh reflects: "This experience showed that students have potential energy in the virtual world, which we would have

not discovered without this Virtual Education program. And this has moved the school's vision into a different place and has shifted its planned academic targets to a new level for the upcoming years."

She adds: "students have passed the Tawjihi (high school diploma) through this crisis peacefully. Now they are applying for the national exams confidently."

Moreover, the Autism unit at our Inclusive School has also sustained its service provision virtually, which was a great relief for their parents. "Yet, it's healthier for them to be part of a class room setup and interact with the environment around them," Bassma Kirresh said.



## Treatment for students at our Inclusive School Ibrahim's Story

Ibrahim has just celebrated scoring 94.5% in his end of year exams at the Princess Basma Inclusive School. He is an excellent student- "شاطر", shatter they say in Arabic, sociable, polite and fiercely independent. His mother likes to hear this because she reports that at home he is a typical child, sometimes mischievous and always wanting to play outside with his friends. Now that he can walk up and down the stairs on his own, he often calls his friends to come and get his wheelchair so that he can join them in the backyard.

Ibrahim has a congenital condition that has affected the movement in his arms and legs. In his first two years at the Princess Basma School, he was enrolled on a specialized program for children with physical disabilities and he is now fully integrated within the school. He continues to benefit from services at the Child Rehabilitation Centre, the medical care, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, transportation and the support from a family social worker. He has grown in confidence and independence. His mother, once struggling now says she is dedicated to supporting her son to become accepted within Palestinian society. She is a wonderful advocate and urges parents everywhere to work towards the inclusion of all children with disabilities. Accepted within Palestinian society.



## Yamen's Online Treatment and Education Within the Virtual Care Model

However, when the West Bank was put into 'lockdown' to prevent the spread of Corona-Virus, his parents were anxious this would affect Yamen's progress. The Centre responded by introducing an online-therapy program. Kefaya says this is making all the difference, as well as training her as a 'shadow therapist.'

**"It gives me the chance to join my son in all activities with his teachers and therapists. I have a clearer understanding and I'm developing my own experience through these sessions."**

Through the care of the JPBC, Yamen's opportunities for development and rehabilitation have been rescued. I feel so blessed to have my son in good hands with such a professional and loving team."

As for Yamen, every time his favorite therapist appears on the screen, he exclaims 'Wow' and he claps his hands in delight!

Yamen, aged five, was finally diagnosed with Autism at the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre and is now enrolled in our Inclusive School.

Kefaya, Yamen's mother says that after seven months in the school:

**"He has changed and developed rapidly, because now, he is in the right place."**



## 1% IS ENOUGH

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**“I can’t see what you can see, but I can imagine what you can’t!”**

Tawba, 11 years old has a vivid imagination and is almost totally blind. She is a pupil in the fourth grade at the Jerusalem Princess Basma Inclusive School and is fully integrated in all aspects of learning with an excellent academic record.

When Tawba was three months old, her family realized that she was not responding to any visual stimulation. This was when doctors assessed her as having just 1% of vision and that nothing could be done to change that. Her family were left to help their daughter to find ways to create a fulfilling and meaningful life.

In spite of the support of her family, Tawba’s early experience at a local school was not a happy one. Now, at the Princess Basma Inclusive School she recalls, “I went through things that made me feel sorry for myself. Despite the teacher’s kindness and care, my classmates in the previous school treated me badly and this caused me pain in the past.

### Counting blessings is better than counting sorrows

Tawba’s experience has made her wise. Understanding that nothing can be done to restore her sight, she focuses on valuing the resources and blessings she does have. “It’s true that I can’t see, but I can imagine what others can’t. This is the reason I can write stories and sing songs.”

In addition, Tawba, has developed a talent for auditory learning and now uses her Braille printer in her studies. She also enjoys the social opportunities that the school offers, explaining that “my grandmother says that I’m a sociable person who can get along with people easily.”

Moreover, Tawba says that she is very happy at the Basma School describing how everyone understands the inclusive values and believes in empowering all who are in need. She describes how she has many friends; how they play and talk together and show each other respect.

### Challenges and dreams

The journey was not easy for Tawba or for her family, but they decided to walk it with faith and hope, learning a new path together. Tawba’s grandmother who is responsible for her education says: “It took a long time and great effort to learn how to use the Braille printer. It was not always easy to keep Tawba strong through all of this.”

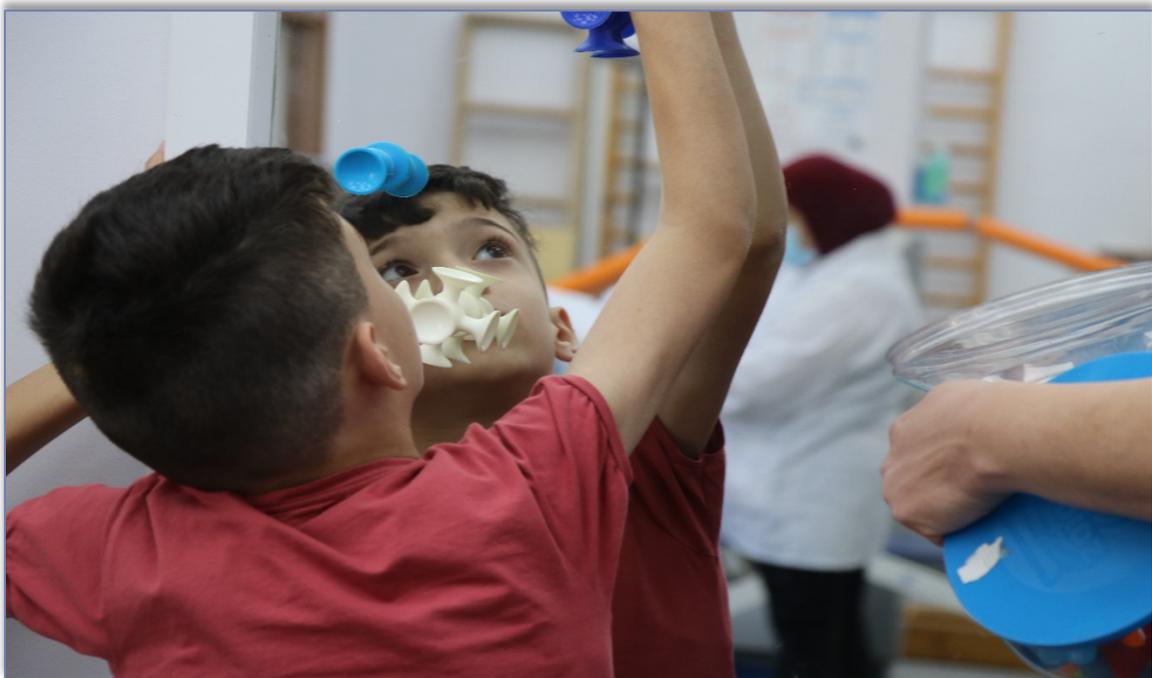
She continues, “Now, I thank God every day when I see how clever and determined Tawba is. I’m glad that she can express herself and motivate her three sisters and the other children.”

Along with her grandmother, Tawba is thankful but she is also ambitious, “I appreciate everything that God has given me and I’m working for a better future for myself. I have big dreams and I’m doing my best.”

Tawba is an inspiration to all children with disabilities to focus on their talents and to dream big.

Thank you!

from the Children, Staff and  
Board Members of the Jerusalem  
Princess Basma Centre.



If you would like to support the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre in providing its services to the Palestinian children with disabilities and their families, please click [here](#). This will take you to our website.

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