

NAS Association for the Disabled

Training, raising awareness, and bettering lives

Empowering Women with Disabilities in Egypt

BACKGROUND

Egypt is considered to possess the best statistics on persons with disabilities (PWDs) in the Arab World. Despite this, most independent observers agree that the Government of Egypt grossly underestimates the numbers of its disabled population. In 1999, the Egyptian Ministry of Planning reported that there were approximately 1.1 million PWDs in Egypt, representing 1.7% of Egypt's population of 63 million at that time.¹ In 2005, the World Bank conducted an extensive household survey in Egypt and found that PWDs numbered between 2.7 million (low estimate) to perhaps a high of 7 million.² With a current population of 80 million, PWDs likely constitute between 5 and 9 percent of the population, an enormous figure.

In general, PWDs in the Arab World are hidden from view. In particular, persons with intellectual, developmental or psychosocial disabilities are considered a source of shame and a burden to their families. Disabled women are even more marginalized. As women, they are segregated from male society, but, as women with disabilities, they are also isolated from the lives of other women. They are, for all intents and purposes, invisible; their issues receive little, or no, consideration; and there are very few national programs that target them specifically. In a social structure that is male dominated in the best of cases, women with disabilities do not stand a chance of rehabilitation, education, accessibility or any number of services available to men with disabilities.

While there are hundreds of local organizations which specialize in providing services to Egyptian PWDs, only a few specialize in promoting PWD rights as their primary mission, and even fewer have projects that specifically target women living with disabilities. However, there is a great need to identify women with disabilities and inaugurate them into these systems of service provision and advocacy, and there is a great need to train this unreached population of Egypt in the language of civil rights and in methods of advocacy. This will not only link women with disabilities to networks of support, but will also train them to become champions for other women and persons with disabilities, enhancing the civil rights awareness and advocacy framework in Egypt.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project will enable NAS Association for the Disabled (NAS) to identify women living with disabilities, who are marginalized in their community, and train them to create network of support in order to effectively defend their rights Egypt. Continued financial support ensures that NAS can organize and implement 12 workshops that will train women with disabilities to become leaders and advocates for the

¹ *Country Profile on Disability: Arab Republic of Egypt*, Government of Egypt, Ministry of Planning, 2002.

² *A Note on Disability Issues in the Middle East and North Africa*, World Bank Development Report 2005.

PWD cause, to teach these skills to other women with disabilities in their districts, and to push forth the civil rights movement in Egypt.

This project will sustain a 3-phased Training-of-Trainers (TOT) program over a course of 3 months, whereby women with disabilities will learn to: communicate the issues that women with disabilities face, as well as their needs; the procedures and processes for voicing complaints; how to best approach media as an advocacy tool; and how to use a variety of mediums for outreach and awareness work (e.g. the arts, technologies, networking). Specifically, the project will support:

- Facility rental for TOT workshops
- Development of presentation topics
- Workshop facilitation
- Provision of learning tools (e.g. stationary supplies, multimedia presentations, sign language interpreter)
- Monitoring and evaluation and follow up surveys

CAPACITY STATEMENT

Founded in 2001, NAS is an Egyptian NGO that advocates for more political, economic, and social rights for the disabled in Egypt. Its Chairman, Dr. Ashraf Marei, is a Professor of Adapted Physical Education at Helwan University in Cairo. NAS has received approximately \$250,000 USD from UNDP, Handicap International, CARE Egypt, and the Ford Foundation to implement awareness programs on the disabled in Egypt. NAS has also received funding to represent Egyptian PWD associations at international conferences on the rights of the disabled. It is connected with the Government of Egypt and has participated in public awareness campaigns on television sponsored by the Egyptian Government on disability issues in Egypt. In 2005-2009 NAS partnered with the International Foundation for Electoral Systems to enhance the participation and visibility of Egyptians with disabilities in their communities through participation in electoral processes and through educating civil servants, civil society and the general public about the importance of building an inclusive society. Currently, NAS is working with a group of lawyers and Egyptian legislators to adopt a new comprehensive law for the rights of the disabled in Egypt in accordance with international conventions on the rights of the disabled. More recently, NAS has received a grant from Bridging the Divide to implement a PWD rights awareness program targeting disabled women in Egypt.

MISSION & VISION

NAS is a member of the coalition of Disabled People Organizations and advocates for a better social, political and economic life for persons with disabilities (PWDs). While PWDs generally represent a disadvantaged marginalized group in Egyptian society, NAS hopes to provide comprehensive integrated services to children and adults living with disabilities, as well as to their families. NAS improves the position of the disabled in Egyptian society through advocacy, job training, educational programs, family counseling, training of trainers, and awareness campaigns that reach the public, the media, and the government.