

Annual Report 2023



Executive Summary

Despite operating within a context that imposed significant challenges which escalated quickly following the Israeli military aggression on the Gaza Strip launched by the occupation government on October 8, 2023, in response to the "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation carried out by the Palestinian resistance on October 7, the institution successfully continued its work during the reporting period.

It implemented an emergency plan to ensure responsiveness and intervention while safeguarding its staff and target groups. The section "Description of the Internal and External Environment" later in this report provides more details on the institution's emergency response.

This section briefly highlights the achievements of the institution across all levels, despite the challenges faced in 2023. **At the programmatic level**, the institution doubled its efforts to enhance the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in their local communities. This was achieved through collaboration with several partners, notably local government bodies (municipalities) in five communities in Hebron Governorate. This involved leveraging youth accountability teams formed and capacitated in the previous year to drive positive changes in inclusion and accountability within these communities. These teams implemented four initiatives in 2023, reaching 450 people from the target communities, 45% of which were PWDs. In addition to this, they conducted 17 accountability sessions in which a total of 72 PWDs participated. The technical support to Community-Based Communities (CBOs) in those communities enabled them to implement community initiatives benefiting 265 people, 75% of whom were PWDs. The partner municipalities initiated five local projects on the priorities and needs of up to 8,898 persons, most of them PWDs and elderly persons.

Regarding the participation of PWDs and their families in local development planning and voting on development priorities, the reporting period witnessed a significant increase in inclusion levels. PWDs' participation in local development planning reached 22%, marking a 271% increase, with 421 PWDs participating compared to just 15 in the previous cycle. Similarly, voting on priorities responsive to the needs of PWDs reached 21%, a notable improvement compared to previous periods.

At the level of participation of persons with disabilities and their families in local development planning processes and voting on development priorities, in the reporting period it was noted that there was an explicit increase in the inclusion of persons with disabilities. The rate of participation of persons with disabilities in local development planning processes rose to 22%, revealing quite a substantial leap of 271%. The grand total who participated equaled 421 persons with disabilities versus 15 from the last cycle. Equally, the number of votes on the priorities responsive to the needs of persons with disabilities reached 21% also marked a very noticeable increase compared to previous periods.

During the reporting period, the institution focused on combining 221 persons with disabilities (PWDs) into the Palestinian labor market, with 57% female and 43% male participants. This was achieved through capacity-building initiatives, income-generation opportunities, and enhancing employment prospects. Among the participants, 115 benefited from a career readiness track, 94 undertook on-the-job training with 112 employers under Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), 46 engaged in vocational and technical training, and 61 pursued entrepreneurship tracks, with 17 receiving funding for self-employment projects.

In terms of long-term impact on beneficiaries over a year, monitoring and data analysis from 161 program participants showed that 146 were combined into the labor force, whether by applying for jobs, competing for positions, attending interviews, or securing temporary or permanent employment contracts.

Among entrepreneurship track participants, 88 were surveyed; 30 secured funding for self-employment projects. Of these, three projects failed and were closed, while 27 remained operational, with 12 having been active for over six months.

At the advocacy level, in 2023, the institution worked on preparing a series of shadow reports based on the contractual mechanisms of international agreements as tools for advocacy, pressure, and influence at the local and international levels. The institution submitted two separate reports to the United Nations committees concerned with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Additionally, it presented an alternative report regarding the State of Occupation's report under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, addressing the list of issues to be answered by the "Israeli colonial occupation authorities".

Furthermore, in March 2023, QADER Institution participated in the 17th session of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The institution's General Director delivered an oral briefing on the report submitted to the Committee, highlighting the key issues that the Committee should consider when formulating the list of issues concerning the State of Palestine.

On the protection services front, interventions for protecting women and girls with disabilities from gender-based violence continued to be implemented by the institution. Community awareness activities were conducted through partnerships with 15 community-based organizations in southern West Bank, which include women's clubs, youth groups, and organizations for PWDs. About 250 women and girls, both with and without disabilities, were reached through these campaigns. Awareness materials were distributed through local radio stations and social media platforms. Collaboration with 10 associations, clubs, and community centers from central and southern West Bank ensured the outreach to 128 women, including those who have disabilities. Moreover, there were 86 women who received psychosocial counseling services, 12 of whom have disabilities while 74 do not have disabilities and 18 mothers of PWDs. These sessions are done with the partnership of different women's clubs. Meanwhile, the institution has maintained its protection services through QADER free hotline as it works on enhancing capacities in partner organizations to ensure the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in their services and interventions.

General Context

Politically and Security-Wise, the "Al-Aqsa Flood" operation carried by the Palestinian resistance on October 7, and the following military aggression on Gaza, was marked as genocide and ethnic cleansing. These actions represented repeated violations of international agreements and norms, showcasing the continued impunity of successive Israeli governments and the double standards of the "International Community". The aftermath of the Israeli aggression led to the killing, injury, and disappearance of approximately 8% of Gaza's population (2.2 million), 70% of whom were women and children. It resulted in the displacement of 1.9 million people, the destruction of about 70% of Gaza's buildings, and the onset of famine, characterized by a lack of food, water, medicine, shelter, and security. The aggression caused the collapse of most healthcare facilities and targeted caregivers, including doctors, nurses, and civil defense teams, as well as journalists and their families. The extreme humanitarian situation was further worsened by international and regional inaction and the blockade on humanitarian aid. This minimal aid represented a drop in the ocean of Gaza's urgent needs, reflecting systematic genocide and ethnic cleansing aimed at the forcible displacement of Gaza's population.

In parallel, the Israeli government intensified its violations in the West Bank, with extraordinary and daily military raids on cities, villages, and camps, especially in the northern West Bank. These incursions resulted, since October 7 of the previous year, in the killing of 455 Palestinians, including at least 117 children, injuring 3,800, and detaining over 7,930 people, including 100 women and girls. The mistreatment of prisoners, including children, escalated to systematic torture and even death, with six deaths in detention documented post-October 7. This brought the total number of prisoner deaths in 2023 to 11.

Alongside, settlement expansion has risen. By the end of 2023, Israeli authorities had approved 210 settlement plans, including 58 in East Jerusalem, covering 5,760 units over 3,470 dunams, and 152 plans in the West Bank with 21,988 units across 9,657 dunams. In the end of 2023, these expansions increased the number of settlements in the West Bank to 176, and settlement outposts to 179, with a total settler population of approximately 730,000.

As for the settlers' attacks, which are carried out under military protection, according to the previous source, settlers performed approximately 2,140 attacks, most of which resulted in damage to property or caused injuries or deaths among Palestinian citizens. This is particularly concerning with the increase in the arming of settlers by the Minister of National Security in the far-right Israeli government.

Regarding the restriction of movement and mobility, the number of military checkpoints in various forms and types in the West Bank reached 567 checkpoints by October 6th, including 77 main checkpoints and 490 other checkpoints (earth berms, concrete cubes, and iron gates). After the war on Gaza began, the number of checkpoints increased, with more than 140 new barriers and obstacles added, bringing the total number to 707.

Economically, as part of its disciplinary measures, the Israeli government resorted to withholding tax revenues from the Palestinian Authority, resulting in the inability to pay the salaries of around 152,000 civil and military employees, which certainly impacted their families.

Undoubtedly, the escalation of Israeli measures after October 7, particularly the increase in military checkpoints, prevented many Palestinian citizens from engaging in their daily activities, such as work and study. Additionally, it stalled access to essential services, especially for the most vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as people with disabilities, women, and children.

Furthermore, approximately 200,000 Palestinian workers from the West Bank, who were employed in Israel, lost their livelihoods after the Israeli government announced its intention to replace them with workers from

other countries. Vital sectors, such as tourism, which was a significant contributor to the Palestinian economy—especially in Bethlehem during Christmas celebrations—were also heavily impacted.

According to a report by the International Labor Organization, dated December 20, 2023, Gaza lost at least 66% of job opportunities since October 7, which amounts to 192,000 jobs. In the West Bank, the adjusted estimates indicate a loss of around 32% of jobs, equivalent to 276,000 jobs. It is estimated that by November 30, 2023, a total loss of 468,000 jobs across the West Bank and Gaza will be recorded due to the continued aggression, surpassing the previous estimates of 390,000 jobs.

The report predicts that the unemployment rate in the occupied Palestinian territories will sharply increase from 24% in the fourth quarter of 2022 to 46.1% in the fourth quarter of 2023, worsening the devastating humanitarian and economic crisis in Gaza.

Socially, the practices of occupation, particularly the deprivation of income, have led to increased rates of unemployment and poverty, which are closely linked to a rise in violence, especially domestic violence. The isolation of cities and villages in the West Bank through the construction of military checkpoints and earth barriers has limited access to essential services, such as healthcare, protection, and education, with the most severe impact on the most marginalized, including people with disabilities, women, and children.

Civil society reality: Despite the challenges and restrictions faced by Palestinian civil society before October 7, such as conditional funding, which greatly limited funding sources and interventions for Palestinian NGOs, this situation worsened following the decision of some Western governments to withhold their funding from these institutions. Considering this, and despite the impact on the institution's ability to implement its activities, especially field activities as originally planned, and despite the inability of staff living outside Bethlehem to reach the organization's headquarters, the institution continued to work with extreme flexibility, ensuring the safety of its staff and participants in its activities and interventions.

QADER organization reviewed all its planned interventions to adapt them to meet emergency humanitarian needs, determining alternative implementation methods and launching activities that address the urgent needs of people with disabilities, particularly in terms of protection for women and children with disabilities in the West Bank, and monitoring the situation of people with disabilities in Gaza to utilize the findings in resource mobilization and urgent needs response. In addition to individual efforts, the organization was eager to participate in collective efforts to assess needs, monitor the situation, and coordinate responses.

Internal Environment During the Reporting Period

Amidst this, the unwavering focus on building and improving administrative and organizational capacities as previously initiated in the last year, the beginning of several policies landed into QADER during 2023. These included the Safeguarding Policy, Complaints and Feedback Policy and Procedures, Anti-Corruption Policy, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, and Policy for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. This was followed by the development of relevant instruments and templates to be presented for approval by the Board of Directors, implying thereby that these would find their way into the modes of operation of QADER. All this was further mixed with more policies and tools that partners with whom QADER worked in capacity-building required to enhance transparency and accountability.

On a different note, QADER has completed developing the strategic plan for 2023–2027 and initiated the process of coming up with a monitoring and evaluation plan to track progress in achieving the strategic objectives. Thus, QADER also worked to review its organizational structure in line with its strategic plan, where the Financial and Administrative Department was developed, headed by the Administrative and Financial Director under the supervision of the Director General of QADER. The specification of the four programmatic units was made at the

program level: Advocacy and Accountability Program, Economic Empowerment Program, Protection Program, and Inclusion and Capacity Building Program, which goes in tandem with the strategic plan.

In addition, it started to create a team of experts and professionals from different sectors, including disability, legal, human rights, and development, among others. Efforts will be geared toward scaling up the production of knowledge by QADER to support its advocacy initiatives and inform the design of programs and interventions. These outputs will also be useful reference materials for all other organizations working in this area to advance the rights of persons with disabilities.

Moreover, QADER pursued the automation process of its documentation system for information management. The first version of this system was developed last year, with further adjustment to align in the next period with the documentation and tracking of intervention-related data, program data, project data, and strategic objective data.

In terms of resource mobilization, QADER engaged in strengthening its existence and forming new relationships with local partners. This was inclusive of visits made by supporters of QADER, engaging potential partners, and reaching out to others with a proposition to explore ways of establishing new strategic partnerships.

Program Performance and Achievements

During the reporting period, QADER implemented interventions towards the achievement of its strategic goals through initiatives designed under the four main programs. These programs collectively work to achieve the goal of empowering persons with disabilities, ensuring and promoting their inclusion, and guaranteeing their full enjoyment of economic, social, civil, and political rights. This was done through multiple tracks that include the Direct Services track on economic empowerment services and psychosocial support services for persons with disabilities, the advocacy track that included the active involvement of right-holders and partners at all levels in the implementation of advocacy campaigns both locally and internationally. The Community Activation track focused on initiating community-led changes within targeted communities for the enhancement of persons with disabilities and their inclusion in society. Finally, the Capacity and Service Development Track focused on enhancing the capacities of service providers in social services, rehabilitation, and education to upgrade the quality of services for persons with disabilities. In parallel, and in view of the emergency context concerning QADER's work, an initiative to monitor and document the conditions of persons with disabilities in the Gaza Strip was launched by QADER. To this end, a set of guiding questions has been drawn up for gathering information on realities such as forced displacement experienced by this group, the availability of assistive devices, and displacement shelter accessibility. Such information will be used to support that knowledge production and efforts to mobilize needed resources to respond to their immediate needs.

At the programmatic level, the achievements were as follows:

1. Economic Empowerment Program

Use of this program is in line with the intention of QADER to contribute to the integration of persons with disabilities into the workforce and the national economy on an equal basis with others in a society where diversity is valued and differences are respected, as required by national law and international human rights standards. The target group is men and women with disabilities aged 18–40 with different forms of disabilities. This will also have an indirect effect on the families of the beneficiaries as well as their immediate community, as it creates a conducive environment for integration of PWDs into the labor market. It will also influence employers' organizations in the private sectors, Civil Society Organizations, and Local Authorities to support accessibility and work integration of PWDs.

QADER pursues an approach, general, multi-tracked, aimed at facilitating the integration of persons with disabilities into the labor market. These tracks involve job readiness and on-the-job training, vocational and technical training, and self-employment. QADER does attain this through the provision of specialized training in skills development, business development services, and avenues to funding opportunities.

All its interventions and services are organized within the framework of the Economic Empowerment Program through the Q-HUB Center for Entrepreneurship and Skills Development, launched in 2021. This program is the first of its kind in Palestine, dedicated specifically to persons with disabilities. It provides all necessary accommodation, and the facilitative measures needed to ensure active participation and inclusion.



During the reporting period, 384 individuals applied to participate in the program, while 221 individuals (96 males and 125 females) from the Hebron and Bethlehem governorates benefited from the program's various tracks. Among these, 115 individuals participated in the Job Readiness and Practical Training track, 45 individuals in the Vocational and Technical Training track, and 61 individuals in the Entrepreneurship track. Additionally, 17 participants from the Entrepreneurship track received financial grants to launch their small businesses.

In addition, during 2023, QADER focused on producing knowledge about the reality and rights of persons with disabilities and the challenges that prevent their access and participation in the labor market, to employ this in advocacy efforts and community accountability, as a specialized study was prepared on “Barriers faced by women with disabilities in entrepreneurship and self-employment in the Palestinian labor market”. The study aimed to understand the barriers and obstacles that impede entrepreneurship and self-employment for women with disabilities in Palestine, and the study provides an in-depth understanding through analysis and evaluation of the range of obstacles that women with disabilities face in the Palestinian labor market. The study also presents an initiative that aims to examine what entrepreneurship offers as a solution for women with disabilities in finding a job opportunity in the Palestinian labor market, and to provide recommendations to stakeholders and decision-makers to contribute to improving the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Palestine for women with disabilities. To view the full study, please visit the following link: [Assessment Study: Barriers faced by women with disabilities in entrepreneurship and self-employment in the Palestinian labor market \(www.qader.org\)](http://www.qader.org).



participants in the vocational and technical training track



5 participants in the Life Skills and Job Readiness track



participants received grants to establish their small businesses



61 participants in the Entrepreneurship track

a. Job Readiness and Practical Training Track



115 persons with disabilities (61 females and 54 males) participated in the job readiness and practical training track, where they received intensive and specialized training for 10 days on life skills and job readiness, including various topics such as communication, leadership, job search skills, resume writing skills, job interviews, the reality of persons with disabilities and their rights in the labor market according to national legislation and the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). These training courses greatly contributed to enhancing the basic skills of the participants and boosted their self-confidence and self-image as productive people capable of engaging and interacting in the work environment.

After completing the training program, 94 participants (52 females and 42 males) received

an internship for two to three months with employers in the private, civil and local government sectors, during which time they received a monthly income of \$360 as pocket money.

The hosting employers met after conducting meetings with over 144 employers from Bethlehem and Hebron governorates to introduce the program and its services as well as explore the possibility of accommodating persons with disabilities into the existing or future opportunities at these companies and institutions. The organization managed to sign MoUs with 112 of them to receive trainees with disabilities, and 13 of them initiated actions to make the work environment more inclusive for the disabled, therefore allowing the participants access and engagement in the work environment of the employers. Three of the operators implemented physical adaptations, including ramp installation and sign-making.

An employer who has trained more than one intern in the career development program said: *"We have always supported persons with disabilities and have partnered with QADER in making efforts towards the integration of those individuals within the Palestinian labor market. Our experience with QADER in training and empowering persons with disabilities has deepened our confidence that they are very productive and motivated employees, so we hired Noor, a young lady with a hearing disability. Noor was able to demonstrate at a quick pace and reach excellence at her work; we decided to establish a labor agreement with her for an indefinite period".*

Another interviewee said, *"QADER gave me the opportunity to meet and socialize with people with disabilities on a day-to-day basis, which completely changed my perception and made me realize that they are productive people. I now, after this experience, believe in their abilities and encourage my colleagues to hire people with disabilities".*

The results of the evaluation showed that 75% of the disabled participants expressed that after attending the course they have gained self-confidence, acquired practical experience in the work environment, and improved their job skills to compete for opportunities in the Palestinian labor market.

Concerning the long-term impact on participants as part of the degree to which the program can be considered successful in mixing them within the Palestinian labor market, the results of monitoring, observation, and analysis of information provided by 161 program participants since 2021, who benefited from the first track of the program, proved that after their participation in the program, as many as 146 became engaged with the

labor market. This includes being employed and either being able to seek employment, compete for a position, conduct an interview, or take on a temporary or permanent position.

At the level of participants benefiting from the entrepreneurship track, the results showed that among the 88 participants surveyed on this track, 30 of them obtained funding opportunities for self-employment projects. It should be noted that 3 of these projects either failed and were closed or probably never initiated by the participants; the rest 27 have been initiated or are being implemented, noting that 12 of these ongoing projects have been established for more than 6 months.

Moatasem, a 25-year-old young man from Hebron, has a mild intellectual disability. Upon completion of the course, he got a job at the Palestinian Red Crescent Society: he said: *"I was looking for a job, and I heard that there is an economic empowerment project for integrating people with disabilities into the labor market. Acquaintances recommended me to join the program. During my internship at the Red Crescent Society, I gained experience and friends. It helped me develop myself in terms of bearing pressure and responsibility, and therefore I got a permanent job there. I feel happy, grateful, self-confident, and independent".*

b. Entrepreneurship and Microenterprise Tracks

In total, 61 (40 females, 21 males) were able to actively participate in the entrepreneurship and microenterprise track. Throughout the training, they received intensive entrepreneurship training as well as business plan development. At the end of the training, participants were to present plans for their own projects and project proposals, with 17 of them having been selected to receive grant funding. Grants awarded were between \$2,400 and \$6,000 per project.

The projects' beneficiaries were 7 males and 10 females from both Hebron and Bethlehem governorates. The projects they set up included packaging and retailing of car and home perfume, oriental and western sweet production, printing and services, library, cell phone maintenance, as well as a greenhouse for blueberries' vertical hydroponic method, machine embroidery, and others.

QADER also organized training in financial management and bookkeeping for 14 participants (6 males, 8 females) who were supported during 2023 and previous years, where the training focused on the skills of preparing and understanding financial reports for small projects. It also entailed understanding pricing policy and reading and understanding financial indicators.

QADER also supported a group of 8 women with hearing disabilities who have an interest in candle-making, where QADER initially worked to develop their skills in the aspects of candle-making, production and marketing. QADER also supported the group by equipping a workshop with equipment, tools and raw materials in cooperation with the Lutheran Church in Beit Jala.

Moayed, 34, who lives with physical disability and holds several certificates in the fields of computer science, marketing, entrepreneurship and a bachelor's degree in political science, said after participating in the empowerment program and getting the opportunity to develop his project: *"The project contributed to a good income for me and my family, and after the success of my project and the great turnout of customers, I became convinced that disability cannot stand in the way of a person's determination and ambition".*

c. Vocational and Technical Track

In 2023, through the support provided by QADER, 45 people (24 females and 21 males) enrolled in 3–6-month courses and programs offered by recognized vocational and technical centers in both Hebron and Bethlehem governorates, and obtained a certified vocational certificate in various fields, including cell phone maintenance, culinary arts, photography and digital photography, secretarial and office management, cell phone maintenance, accounting, and others.

The vocational and technical training track targets people with disabilities who do not have the academic qualifications, practical or vocational experience needed to enter the labor market, as they are engaged in specialized vocational training that enhances their skills and opportunities to enter the labor market.

d. Al-Reem Agricultural

QADER established the Reem Agricultural Project in the city of Jericho in 2021, in partnership with the Jericho Municipality Community Center and the Jericho Municipality, where the project provides an integrated model of agricultural work methodology to rehabilitate and train people with disabilities within therapeutic, educational, economic and social objectives that allow participants to have an opportunity to learn, rehabilitate, unload and develop their skills on several levels.

The project was implemented on a plot of land attached to the community center and owned by the Jericho Municipality, with an area of 4 dunums, and a greenhouse was built in two phases, with an area of 2000 square meters, in addition to the construction of a 60 cubic meter cement tank. During 2023, training services were provided to a group of 22 participants with intellectual disabilities from the community center on planting seedlings.



2. Advocacy and Accountability Program

There is an issue so deep in the concept of disability that increased over many years that may have allowed the surfacing and enlargement of great forms of discrimination on the bases of gender and disability at many levels, regulations actions, capacities, and social cultures. Addressing disability from the perspective of the individual (medical/charity) rather than the perspective of human rights is what has led to a severe violation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international conventions and covenants.

Accordingly, QADER has expanded its efforts to monitor the extent of the State of Palestine's commitment in implementing the international human rights conventions to which it has acceded because of its importance concerning the reality of the rights of persons with disabilities and its reflection on the human rights system.

During 2023, at the level of international advocacy, QADER prepared a set of shadow reports — based on the contractual mechanisms of international conventions — as a tool for advocacy, pressure, and influence

at the local and international level. This is because QADER submitted two separate reports to the United Nations committees on the CRPD and CEDAW. These reports highlight the most prominent issues which hold back persons with disabilities in the State of Palestine from enjoying their rights and freedoms on an equal basis with others. The subject matter of these reports is related to the approaching discrimination and exclusion in the rights system due to general design, reasonable accommodation, accessibility, and a weak protection system because of the absence of such conditions.

QADER also engaged in drafting an alternative report on the State of Israel's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child with respect to the list of issues to be taken up with the Israeli occupying authorities, the report of the State of Occupation, and QADER's oral intervention during its participation in the official session, which took place virtually, stressing the need for a broad study of the occupational context with apartheid carried out in the Palestinian territory now occupied, and its impression upon Palestinian children, particularly those afflicted by a disability, aside from attention to be paid regarding the psychological trauma and disability that occupation practices bear within Palestinian children. The case was presented of prisoner Ahmed Manasra, a minor trapped within captivity for some years and who is suffering from mental disability and psychiatric disorders because of the torture and inhumane treatment as an example of what Palestinian children suffer in occupation prisons.

In March 2023, QADER actively took part in the seventeenth session of the Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities at the United Nations headquarters located in Geneva, Switzerland. The Director General of QADER made an oral briefing of the report, which was submitted by QADER to the Committee, emphasizing the most important issues that the Committee should take into consideration when drafting the list of issues for the State of Palestine.



**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS –
GENEVA (MARCH 2023)**

QADER kept on playing its part and active role in different coalitions and networks, especially the NGO Forum to Combat Violence Against Women, and contributed to shedding light on the actual situation of the rights of women and girls with disabilities in the report of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was submitted to the relevant committee at the United Nations.

Participation of the Advisory Council for Children and Adolescents in a regional advocacy workshop:

Under the umbrella of QADER's membership in the Arab Network for Children's Rights - Manara, an Arab regional NGO established in 2009 and based in Lebanon, which works on advocacy, support, and raising awareness levels of civil society organizations to defend, participate in and protect children's rights within the strategy of child participation, its strategic goal is to promote children's rights through the formulation of legislations, policies, and budgets that help in the fight against violence on children.

The children from QADER Advisory Council participated in the workshop and conference that prepared a regional advocacy strategy led by children via the Zoom platform. It took place



**PARTICIPATION OF QADER'S CHILD
ADVISORY COUNCIL IN THE CONFERENCE**

in Istanbul, Turkey, from December 26-29, 2023, with 22 children participating from 10 Arab countries. The general objective of the workshop was to enhance the Children's Advisory Committee's capacity in advocacy actions through the development of a draft regional advocacy strategy for the priority issue in the Arab region and transmitting the voice of the Arab child at regional and international levels on violations that happened and continue to happen against children in Palestine. QADER worked to prepare the two participating girls from Palestine to participate in papers dealing with the reality of Palestinian children, especially children with disabilities, and especially the children of the Gaza Strip and the grave human rights violations they are subjected to considering the genocidal war waged by the occupation against the Gaza Strip.

Analytical Report on the Draft Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2019:

Through our membership in the small committee to review the law, we submitted an analytical report to the Council of Ministers, as the report aimed to introduce a set of observations and amendments in line with the general obligation of the State of Palestine under the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and General Comment No. 7-2018 issued by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which emphasizes ensuring the effective and authentic participation of representative organizations and institutions for persons with disabilities at the legislative and policy level and in scientific practice, as a frame of reference on which the law is based, in addition to the report addressed a set of recommendations.

QADER will continue to follow the progress made in the review process through our membership of the mini committee to review the law and make sure to take notes until the law is approved.

Including the priorities of persons with disabilities in the strategic plans of the ministries concerned for the 2024-2029 cycle:

Throughout the planning years 2024-2029, under the umbrella of national and sectoral planning, in partnership with the General Department for

Inclusion, in this present context, refers to a policy or measure that will ensure equal rights, opportunities of access to resources and services and participation in any activity - social, educational, economic, or cultural - to all people with disabilities and which does not single out the background, capabilities, gender, race, religion, or factor of any grounds for discrimination leading to exclusion and marginalization. Inclusion is intended to ensure that people with disabilities are treated with dignity and respect, in such a way that no one is marginalized or excluded on the grounds of diversity or difference but rather to create a society where all people with disabilities could fully participate, contribute and benefit from the available opportunities. Often association is used to promote diversity, belonging and acceptance of individual differences. Public policies cannot lead to equality and social justice without having inclusion and including a disability that indicates the government's interest in equality and social justice. The outcome is equal opportunity for all citizens irrespective of their abilities; disability inclusion is about respecting the human rights of all people without discrimination. The state shall act on all the duties that are recognized at the national level ensuring access to services and opportunities available for all; development is not sustainable unless the planning and development take into consideration the needs of all citizens and, thereby, contribute towards the building of a more inclusive and resilient society and economy; more chances for economic and social participation for persons with disabilities occur only when the needs of persons with disabilities are incorporated into general development. Disability is part of the society's inclusive development. More inclusive and resilient societies are built as the needs of all citizens are considered. More inclusive development happens when the needs of all population groups are considered.

Government ministries and organizations that have worked with them to include disability in their strategic plans:

Ministry of Social Development, 2. Ministry of Health, 3. Ministry of Education, 4. Ministry of Higher Education, 5. Ministry of Labor, 6. Ministry of Local Government, 7. Ministry of Women's Affairs, 8. Ministry of National Economy, 9. Ministry of Transport and Communications, 10. Supreme Council for Youth and Sports.

Persons with Disabilities at the Ministry of Social Development, and in coordination with the Prime Minister's Office, QADER provided technical support to ten government ministries to include issues and priorities of disability in their strategic plans. For, this process of inclusion was to be rooted in the methodology of a human rights approach, alongside the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the claim of Sustainable Development Goals, and the principle of "leaving no one behind".

In 2023, a review was conducted of strategies (2021-2023), related legislation, and reports to make sure major disability aspects were integrated into the process. It was therefore important that the relevant departments include people from all targeted ministries and governmental institutions in a series of five meetings. A total of 44 participants from the ministries attended the meetings in which major gaps in the inclusion of disability in previous strategies were to be highlighted, so that a general framework and direction of the inclusion process could be discussed. For that purpose, each ministry also received a special paper prepared on their behalf by QADER and the General Administration of Persons with Disabilities. The paper included principles and general directions of the inclusion process, key concepts and terms related to the issue, an analysis of the main issues and challenges existing in their specific sector, and proposals on how to integrate disability at outcomes and strategic interventions levels in each strategic plan.

Developing the Quality of Diagnosis and Evaluation Services for Children with Intellectual Disabilities:

Within the framework of the partnership between QADER and the Ministries of Health and Social Development with respect to improving the quality of diagnosis and assessment services for children with intellectual disabilities, QADER initiated a training program that would upgrade the expertise of the Ministry of Health on the issue of diagnosing and evaluating intellectual abilities in children.

The **first package** is the basic concepts of diagnosis regarding intellectual disabilities, designed for 48 trainees/staff members of the Ministry of Health in specific professions, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, and social workers. Participants are divided into three training groups based on their work location in the central, northern, and southern West Bank. Each group attends two days of training.

The **second training** package is on diagnostic tools, with 35 participants geared toward staff in the Ministry of Health and UNRWA employees, comprising psychiatrists, specialists, and social workers. The two groups were those for the southern and northern West Bank. The group from the Central West Bank, which had to be rescheduled because of the state of emergency, will be conducted soon. It will be followed by a supervision program for the training groups on the diagnostic tools.

The training program will continue throughout the year 2024. In addition, during the years 2021-2023, QADER will develop, in partnership with the Ministries of Health and Social Development, a manual for monitoring diagnostic and evaluation services at the national level for children with intellectual disabilities. This will take place once the manual has been finalized; the relevant staff from the Ministries of Health and Social Development will be trained in applying this manual.

3. Inclusion and Capacity Building Program

The Inclusion and Capacity Building Program is the primary driver of QADER's interventions aimed at enhancing capacities, behaviors, and community practices that support the rights of persons with disabilities and their inclusion in their communities. The program works on strengthening the role and responsibility of community-based communities and relevant stakeholders towards the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

The program focuses on investing in youth as an essential engine of societal change to foster behaviors and community practices that support the rights of persons with disabilities and hold stakeholders accountable within the framework of their commitments towards the rights and priorities of persons with disabilities.

Youth are an essential engine of social change.

Inclusive Youth Accountability Teams

In 2023, QADER expanded its work with youth groups, collaborating with youth accountability teams in five areas within Hebron Governorate. These teams were formed and trained in 2022.

Comprising youth with and without disabilities, the accountability teams implemented various community interventions aimed at enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities in social, economic, cultural, political, and community aspects across five localities: Al- Samu', Al-Dahiriyah, Al-Shuyukh, Beit Ummar, and Beit Ula.

In addition to community initiatives, the youth accountability teams held 17 accountability sessions with duty-bearers in departments of health, education, social development, labor, and local governance in northern and southern Hebron, as well as five municipalities in the targeted areas. These sessions involved 45 duty-bearers from various directorates and municipalities. The teams discussed the challenges and needs faced by persons with disabilities in their towns and ways to address them within the roles and responsibilities of official institutions.

In 2023, the youth teams implemented four community initiatives aimed at modifying societal behaviors towards persons with disabilities. These initiatives involved 450 participants, including approximately 203 persons with disabilities. The initiatives were executed by the youth teams from Beit Ummar, Al-Shuyukh, Dura, and Samu'. Activities ranged from theatrical performances for school students, medical days for persons with disabilities and their families, to recreational activities addressing issues like bullying against students with disabilities and providing safe spaces for children with disabilities to integrate into recreational activities alongside children without disabilities, fostering a culture of inclusion.

These initiatives were carried out in community centers, schools, and kindergartens in the targeted communities. A total of 480 individuals participated in the activities (including advocacy and recreational events), among them 275 persons with disabilities (136 females and 137 males).

Community Engagement through Local Organizations

In 2023, QADER partnered with ten community-based organizations and organizations of persons with disabilities in Hebron Governorate to support their organizational capacities and enhance their ability to reach and target persons with disabilities in their programs and services. An evaluation of their organizational capacities was conducted, followed by the development of capacity-building plans.

As part of the priorities for capacity-building, QADER held workshops for partner organizations on topics including the rights of persons with disabilities, etiquette in interacting with them, project management (provide funding and proposal writing), and principles and practices of governance (legal frameworks, organizational statutes, membership management, meetings, concepts of integrity, and accountability), as well as strategic planning.

QADER will continue to collaborate with these organizations in 2024 to conduct training on financial management, human resources, and procurement topics.

QADER also funded the ten partner organizations to implement community initiatives aimed at empowering and including persons with disabilities in their communities. Activities included physical adaptations to facilitate accessibility to partner organizations' facilities, awareness workshops on protection from violence and the rights of persons with disabilities, training for staff at two kindergartens to enable them to accommodate and support children with disabilities, as well as training on employability and entrepreneurship for youth. These initiatives had a significant impact on fostering the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the targeted organizations' activities.

Throughout 2023, the targeted community-based organizations engaged 265 individuals from the five targeted communities (66 males and 199 females), including 200 persons with disabilities and their families. Community-driven initiatives by youth teams and community-based organizations will continue in 2024.



PARTICIPATION OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE TARGETED ORGANIZATIONS IN THE CAPACITY-BUILDING TRAININGS FOR LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS.



A CANDLE-MAKING WORKSHOP HELD AS PART OF INCLUSION INITIATIVES IN THE TARGETED ORGANIZATIONS – AL-RAHMA ASSOCIATION IN BEIT ULA.



DURING THE PARTICIPATION OF A GROUP OF WOMEN IN BEIT ULA IN AN AWARENESS SESSION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES.

Community Development Based on Inclusion

During the reporting period, youth accountability teams worked to enhance the participation of persons with disabilities in local developmental planning processes to ensure their responsiveness to the priorities and needs of persons with disabilities. This included participating in various stages of the local developmental planning process, such as diagnosis, analysis, issue identification, and prioritization of interventions.

Awareness activities continued, aiming to highlight the importance of local development planning and encouraging the participation of persons with disabilities and their families through workshops, the filming and production of short promotional videos (Reels), which included calls from local authority heads for the participation of persons with disabilities, these were published on municipal pages. An awareness video about the planning process was also shared, featuring encouraging messages for participation from the Director of the Local Governance Directorate, as well as activists with disabilities within youth teams. This video was posted in project areas, in addition to printing and distributing written awareness materials.

These efforts resulted in increased participation in the initial planning meetings, with 421 individuals participating in the launch of the planning process across the five targeted areas. Persons with disabilities and their families represented 22% of attendees in the first community meetings and the launch of the planning process that began in December 2022 and continued until January 2023. It is worth noting that the participation of persons with disabilities in the previous planning process in 2018 was limited to only 15 individuals in the five targeted communities. The significant increase in their participation highlighted QADER's effective intervention through youth teams and awareness campaigns. Consequently, issues related to persons with disabilities emerged as one of the top five priorities in four of the targeted areas.

Thus, these activities concluded in the emergence of the voice of persons with disabilities and their advocates in the process of voting on priorities, especially that those who participated in the planning process without disabilities were unanimous in voting on some priorities related to the disability sector as a result of hearing about the difficulties and challenges facing persons with disabilities in their communities, which made participants realize the importance of these issues for persons with disabilities.

During the second workshops held to vote on the issues, issues related to the disability sector emerged through voting on community priorities for development issues for the next four years, and according to the active participation of persons with disabilities and their families, which exceeded 21%, which in turn was directly reflected in the voting results and prioritized issues to find that the issue of persons with disabilities topped the top five ranks in four regions, and their issue was not excluded in any of the locations.

On the other hand, QADER held a roundtable meeting with the Ministry of Local Government and the Municipal Development and Lending Fund to present the organization's work methodology and its impact on increasing the participation of persons with disabilities and their families in the planning process, in addition to sharing recommendations for some proposed amendments to the Local Development Planning Manual to be more inclusive.

This process was followed by the identification of projects to be funded through discussion sessions held by QADER with municipal councils and the projects department in the municipalities to identify interventions that can be implemented within the identified priorities. In cooperation with the municipalities, QADER succeeded in implementing five local development projects that support the improvement of the reality of people with disabilities, as follows:

1. Supply and installation of an elevator for the municipalities of Al-Shuyoukh and Beit Ummar, within the priority of improving accessibility and adaptation of public institutions, including the municipality, so that persons with disabilities can follow the services provided by the municipalities and participate in all activities and meetings held by the municipalities. According to the municipalities, it is estimated that these adaptations

will benefit about 2384 people/month in Beit Ummar and 3464 people/month in Shuyoukh, including people with disabilities, the elderly, and pregnant women.

2. Rehabilitation and adaptation work for Dhahiriya Municipality, including adapting the entrance and other floor levels for people with physical disability, installing directional signs at the municipality entrance and office entrances in Braille, installing directional signs on the floor of the corridors in the municipality to guide the visually disabled, and printing a guidebook for municipal services in Braille for visitors at the Public Services Center. The beneficiaries are estimated to be 1300 people/month, including people with disabilities and the elderly.

3. Developing the services of Al-Rahma (Mercy) Charity Association for Persons with Disabilities; two special education rooms were equipped in the association's new building, and the outdoor garden was equipped with toys for children who receive rehabilitation services at the association. In addition to the MOVE rehabilitation room, the association receives people with disabilities from the western line communities of Hebron (near Beit Ula) such as Idhna, Tarqumiya, Nuba, and Kharas. The beneficiaries are estimated at 200 people/month.

4. Equipping the audiogram room at Al-Samou Community Center, which provides audiograms, inner ear examination and hearing screening services for newborns, and the municipality of Al-Samou announced the opening of the unit and the start of service provision. The municipality announced the opening of the unit and the start of the service, which has had the greatest impact on the people of Al-Samu'a in light of the road closures and the long distance to reach Hebron for these examinations, in addition to the poor economic situation that affected Al-Samu'a like the rest of the West Bank as a result of the closures and unemployment of workers. The unit provides the service at a symbolic operating price of 30 shekels, while the average cost of the test in private centers in Hebron is 80 shekels, in addition to 50 shekels for transportation for the child and his/her companion. It is estimated that at least 1,550 people will benefit from the unit (including 550 newborns and 1,000 children and the elderly).

MOVE Methodology

Since adopting the MOVE methodology in 2010, QADER has continued to promote and oversee its implementation in community organizations targeting children with severe and complex physical disabilities. Since then, QADER has successfully provided technical support to seven organizations, six in the West Bank and one in the Gaza Strip.



The technical support included training the staff of the targeted organizations and centers on the methodology, providing technical supervision and follow-up visits, as well as supplying the benefiting centers with the necessary tools and equipment to implement the methodology. In parallel, work is being done with the families of the beneficiary children, in line with QADER's belief in the importance of applying a participatory approach that focuses on the needs of the beneficiaries and their families. The number of children benefiting from the rehabilitation interventions based on the MOVE methodology reached 60 out of a total of 191 children receiving rehabilitation services from these centers. These organizations and centers successfully integrated 9 children into schools and kindergartens, either fully or partially.

During the reporting period, the team continued to build on the achievements made over the past years, aiming to sustain these accomplishments and create a noticeable impact on the motor skills of the targeted children. Indeed, the team observed this impact through several success stories, which inspired hope not only in the hearts of the benefiting children but also in the staff involved in the rehabilitation process, as well as in the

families of the children. For these families, their greatest wish was to see their children walk a few steps without assistance, and now they see them walking, sitting, and eating independently.

“I just want to see my daughter walk” - An Inspiring Success Story from the Town on Idhna in Hebron.

In the town of Idna in Hebron Governorate, there is an inspiring success story that speaks to the remarkable transformation and development of the child Maryam. She began her journey with the community center in 2022. At just one and a half years old, she suffered from both intellectual and physical disabilities resulting from birth hypoxia. "I just want to see my daughter walk like other children," said the mother when coming to the center seeking help for her daughter. The therapy team at the center responded by designing a treatment program using the "MOVE" methodology.

Nearly two years later, there was a major turn-around in Maryam's life. She could sit on her own for more than half an hour, either on a chair or on the ground, and move around independently. All this that Maryam achieved went along with her remarkable progress using a walker, and she can now walk several steps with the aid of the specialized team.

Maryam's skills continued to increase, which later allowed her better control of her hand movements compared to the past, whether holding or releasing something. This obviously speaks of the power of determination and how much positive influence a properly adjusted therapy can have on the process of getting better and developing a child.



Some Achievements of QADER Team in Capacity-Building for Centers and Institutions Presented According to the Type of Intervention:

First: Training of Professional Staff in Targeted Centers

During 2023, the training targeted 71 professionals at the community center and rehabilitation institution levels working with the implementation of the MOVE methodology in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Technical teams were provided with a total of nine days of training focusing on MOVE methodology, dealing with stress and emergencies, and fundamental concepts of practices related to working with children with disabilities.



***TRAINING OF AL-RAHMA CHARITABLE ASSOCIATION'S STAFF
ON THE MOVE METHODOLOGY.***

Second: Technical Supervision

The total number of visits paid during the reporting period is 34 supervisory and technical follow-up visits that covered community centers located in the governorates of Hebron and Jericho in the West Bank as well as the Dar Al-Mahaba o Al-Salam (The House of Love and Peace) in Gaza Strip. Visit activities comprised, besides technical supervision and follow-up, capacity building of rehabilitation professionals on applying the methodology in compliance with qualified standards and QADERS which includes the use of assessment tools, the methodology guide, and developing educational plans for children to ensure effectiveness in performance and achieving therapeutic goals. An endeavor for these children to be able to acquire basic skills for sitting, standing, and walking to achieve maximum independence in daily life skills



SAMOU' MUNICIPALITY COMMUNITY CENTER

These visits and training sessions were beneficial for a total of 45 professionals, specifically workers in the social sector, speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, special educators, and physical therapists. There are 191 children registered in these services meant for people living with severe disabilities associated with intellectual disabilities that range from mild to moderate. Of these children, 47% are girls and 54% are boys.

Third: Support to Centers Providing Specialized Equipment and Tools

In 2023, MOVE centers supported educational devices and tools valued at \$62,000.

Fourth: Strengthening Partnerships to Promote the MOVE Methodology

Local networks have been extended and consolidated with rehabilitation institutions and centers that provide services for children with disabilities. This year, several institutions received consultations and assessment visits from the team, including a charity rehabilitation association based in Hebron. It is an

example of one institution that benefitted from the implementation of MOVE methodology into their services. The center was supplied with educational equipment and tools and provided staff training in the implementation of the MOVE program. Two other institutions, one of which is in Ramallah governorate, received consultation and technical support.

Community Activities: QADER, in collaboration with "Hearing the Call" and cooperation with "Yamima," organized a free medical day for children and adults with hearing difficulties to get hearing tests. Specialized doctors conducted these two days of testing on the hearing examination of 146 individuals from the Hebron, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem governorates. Free hearing aids were also allocated; 96 beneficiaries were to benefit from this gesture, 56 of whom were children and 90 adults and elderly people.

Success Story: Mayar's Journey

Mayar, a 5-year-old girl with delayed motor development due to genetic issues from birth, was diagnosed with difficulty in motor muscle control at 8 months old. Given the similarity of her condition to her older brother's, early intervention was initiated. She joined the community center at the age of one, receiving physical therapy sessions to enhance her motor skills.



At three years old, Mayar joined the MOVE program to continue her progress. She faced significant challenges in rehabilitation, including severe delays in cognitive abilities and head control. She required support to sit or stand and use a walker. The MOVE team focused on helping Mayar improve her standing and walking abilities using a treadmill to enhance her independence in sitting and eating.

Mayar's progress was remarkable. She gained the ability to sit independently and eat well. She advanced in using the walker and gradually managed to stand unaided. Currently, Mayar can stand for up to three minutes without support and has taken her first three steps independently. Additionally, she has been partially integrated into a kindergarten class in collaboration with the special education department, where her academic and motor skills are being developed. Mayar's success story highlights the importance of early intervention in improving children's developmental outcomes.

On the other hand, the team continued to collaborate with Palestinian universities (Bethlehem University and Al-Quds University) to integrate the MOVE methodology into the curriculum, covering both the theoretical and practical framework of the methodology within the educational program for students in the physical therapy and occupational therapy departments. However, it was not possible to hold any training sessions for students due to the



closure of universities and the shift to online education because of the political situation. It was decided to postpone the training to the next semester in 2024.

4. Protection Program

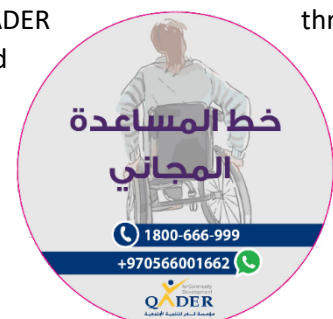
The Protection Program works toward the elimination of all forms of discrimination, exclusion, violence, and inequality against children, women, and young people with disabilities. It wants to make sure that people with disabilities, especially women, girls, and children, have accessibility to protective services against violence because of their disabilities and gender.

It conducts awareness campaigns that focus on people living with disabilities and their families as well as community members and service providers. The campaign educates them on the significance of accessing protection services as a right and the need for provision to make such services inclusive for people living with disabilities.

QADER also works to enhance access to various protection services for persons with disabilities, especially women and girls, through multiple interventions with protection service providers at both formal and informal levels. This includes providing guidance, psychosocial support, and referral services.

Achievements in this context include:

Free Helpline: Protection services were continued to be delivered by QADER through its free helpline, with greater focus on emergencies which block women and girls with disabilities from access to protection services in West Bank and on the marginalization of women and girls with disabilities in Gaza. Individual psychological support for them and their families, networking and referrals to partner institutions in the protection sector were provided by the helpline during the reporting period. It would include referral cases to legal services for women and girls who are experiencing any form of violence.



Awareness Campaigns: Simultaneously, in 2023, QADER conducted wide awareness campaigns to enhance access to women and girls' protection services and make known their right to be protected from violence. Such campaigns used various tools including community awareness activities with 15 community-based institutions from southern West Bank; these consisted of women's and youth clubs and organizations for persons with disabilities. Through these campaigns, 250 women and girls with disabilities and without disabilities were reached.

Additionally, QADER prepared and spread awareness materials via local radio stations and social media. In 2023, QADER printed and distributed 2,000 brochures, 2,000 flyers, and 1,000 posters containing information about violence against women and girls with disabilities. These materials explained forms of violence, referral services, and specialized protection services provided by QADER.

In addition, two radio dialogue sessions were conducted. One of them focused on the violations of the rights of persons with disabilities, specifically women and children, in times of crises and emergencies. The other paid attention to the effects of military closures in the West Bank on the access of persons with disabilities to protection services, particularly women and children. It reached about 8,000 people, as estimated.

Furthermore, QADER developed and disseminated two awareness videos. The first looked at the situation of persons with disabilities in Gaza during the military aggression; the second highlighted protection services by QADER's helpline for women and girls with disabilities. These videos are estimated to have reached about 37,000 people.

Awareness Sessions: Applying a holistic approach to interventions and stemming from the importance of addressing negative societal attitudes to reduce gender-based violence and violence against persons with disabilities, QADER dedicated a significant portion of its interventions in 2023, in collaboration with community-based partner organizations, to conducting awareness-raising sessions at the grassroots level. These sessions targeted women and girls in general, with a particular focus on women and girls with disabilities, as well as various segments of local communities. The goal was to influence attitudes to promote protection concepts against violence based on a rights-based approach and to educate rights holders about their rights and the means to claim them.

Sessions aimed at awareness-raising of gender-based and disability-related violence, presentation of the free helpline services, and sharing healthy techniques for psychological stress and constructive expression of emotions. These sessions were conducted in partnership with 10 associations, clubs, and community centers in the Central and Southern West Bank in front of 128 women, including those with disabilities.

Psychosocial Support: The Protection Program reflected the importance of mental health in containing gender-based and disability-related violence; therefore, it offered psychosocial support services during the reporting period. These were to be used for an initial assessment related to targeted women and girls' psychosocial needs and then to develop an intervention plan that would detail types and numbers of sessions and other interventions available through the national referral system.

In the reporting period, 86 women accessed psychosocial support services including 12 women with disabilities, 74 women without disabilities, and 18 mothers of persons with disabilities. The sessions were conducted in collaboration with various women's clubs.

On another note, as part of QADER's partnership with Bethlehem University to host and train social work students, QADER provided training for a group of six female students on various issues aimed at enhancing the concept of protection for women and girls with disabilities. This was achieved through the design and implementation of community initiatives that highlight this concept.

During the four-month training period, the students carried out an initiative titled "*Leave No One Behind*". The initiative focused on shedding light on the violations faced by persons with disabilities because of the military assault on the Gaza Strip, in addition to raising awareness about the importance of ensuring their protection. The initiative included a variety of activities such as awareness sessions, community outreach efforts, distribution of brochures and posters specific to the initiative, and the use of social media platforms. Throughout the training, participants also attended a two-day workshop on digital safety, social media platforms, and the mechanisms of designing and building online campaigns.

Capacity Building for Civil Society and community-based organizations

As part of its efforts to include women with disabilities in partner institutions' services, QADER collaborated with three organizations working on protecting women from violence: the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling, the Palestinian Family Planning and Protection Association, and the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development.

QADER reviewed and developed operational guidelines for handling gender-based violence complaints and established a general framework for including women with disabilities in violence reporting and protection services. Partner institutions received specialized training to build their capacity to provide inclusive protection services for women and girls with disabilities. The training included mechanisms and approaches

for working with women and girls with disabilities within partner organizations at both procedural and policy levels. It also covered principles and approaches for engaging with women and girls with disabilities, as well as reasonable accommodation measures. The training resulted in an action plan to maintain disability inclusion in the services provided by partner organizations.

Additionally, QADER collaborated with the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counseling to produce a short video about the center's services and translated four related videos into sign language.

Networking and Coordination

QADER seeks to maintain and increase its presence and effective involvement in all platforms, networks, and national and regional alliances to integrate the subject of disability into all the collective initiatives being implemented in civil society, humanitarian, and human rights sectors.

QADER continued its active participation in several of these frameworks during the reporting period, in addition to joining the Arab Network for Child Rights "Manara". Membership of QADER in this network is considered as the representation of the State of Palestine.



In this part of the report, the achievements made by QADER in this regard are outlined below:

In the media field, a MOU was signed with the Arab Center for Social Media Development "Hamla". The agreement aimed at developing the safety, security, and digital resilience standards of QADER. This followed earlier observations by "Hamla" of QADER's work, which had an interest in further improving by supporting QADER in digital security. Consequently, "Hamla" carried out an assessment to determine the level of digital security and resilience of QADER. It came up with recommendations for the development of QADER's work and supported QADER with a grant of \$1,000 for the purchase of related equipment and software.

As a member of the National Coalition for the Employment of People with Disabilities, QADER signed an MOU with the Palestinian Employment Fund during the reporting period. Coordination meetings were conducted with the Fund to incorporate and consider the provision of services and programs for people with disabilities. In this network, the Secretariat of the Palestinian Coalition for Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights- "Adalah", in which QADER is a member, the team participated in several meetings related to the coalitions. Several position papers were issued, especially regarding military aggression on the Gaza Strip, and marginalized groups - women, children, people with disabilities, etc., in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Some of the activities conducted by the coalition during the reporting period include carrying out an advocacy campaign against the proposed VAT law and clause (2). The campaign was able to get the clause amended by the Palestinian Ministry of Finance and Planning. Another coalition campaign led to calls for the withdrawal of a system introduced by the Palestinian Monetary Authority which, under the pretext of "fighting terrorism and money laundering," granted extensive powers to intervene in the work of civil society organizations. This time, a promise to withdraw the system was obtained from Prime Minister Shtayyeh. Moreover, it prepared a draft position paper for the repeal of all amendments to the Judicial Authority Law and the judicial system legislations, incepted as "Decrees by Law", manifestly in deliberate breach of the Basic Law. In support of this happening, the stand of the Palestinian Bar Association on the decrees' invalidity has been supported.

The Secretariat of the coalition also followed up with the mismanagement of the COVID-19 files, where home testing prices were manipulated, and this was taken up by the Ministry of Health and committed to addressing. The other issues that were brought up by members of the coalition covered financial policies, the ever-rising cost of living, and public funds management. Others were also on issuing a position paper on financial reform directions and supporting the Palestinian Medical Syndicate in its stand against the decision to dissolve the

union, and positions to be taken on public freedoms, tightening control on civil society, and international policies.

The issues developed by the Palestinian Adolescent Health Coalition were implemented during the period of this report, in a series of activities that include a set of workshops for capacity building of institutions in the field of sexual and reproductive health. All members of the coalition were trained in this topic. In another activity, a training session on qualitative research was conducted, concentrating on research regarding adolescents, emphasizing methodological approaches in qualitative research concerning the health and well-being of adolescents, especially the most marginalized groups of adolescents.

Within its membership in the Women's Civil Coalition for CEDAW Coalition, QADER contributed to the elaboration of the coalition's annual plan. It also participated in a set of meetings and consultations to address the attack by dark forces on human rights defenders, which the coalition led with decision-makers. Moreover, QADER took part in a briefing for non-governmental organizations of the CEDAW working group in an informal setting to prepare the list of issues related to the report of the occupying state on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. During this session, QADER presented an intervention regarding women and girls with disabilities.

QADER participated in a workshop that falls within the coalition's advocacy plan. This specific workshop focused on including the issues related to Palestinian refugee women in state reports and shadow reports that are to be presented to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. The speakers were drawn from Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan and provided papers on Palestinian refugee women in their countries.

Ever since joining the Palestinian Civil Society Forum for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, QADER has been active in the forum's work and interventions. This is especially significant since QADER deals directly with interventions designed to reduce violence against women and girls with disabilities, improving their protection systems, and mainstreaming gender and disability as cross-cutting issues.

The following is what QADER achieved during the reporting period. It participated in the Anti-Violence Forum activities. A forum that directed a campaign through its members in response to emergent cases. One of the campaigns that were run is the "Support for Jenin and Gaza Women". This specific program gave quick responses with steps to be taken immediately to meet alignment action plans for women's needs in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as well as help the stranded women in Gaza who are now stuck in the West Bank after aggression on October 7. QADER also joined hands with members of the forum to provide material support to women from the heavily targeted occupation forces as well as Jenin refugee camp. It also extended psychological and social support to Palestinian women from Gaza residing in the West Bank.

Moreover, QADER participated in the actions and interventions of the Civil Society Team for Supporting Budget Transparency. During 2023, reports on public affairs and the general budget as well as position papers on the emergency budget, government budget management policy, and Israeli government confiscation of tax revenues were prepared by the team.

Capacity Development for the Staff

12 staff members of the institution benefited from twelve capacity-building training sessions delivered by local partners, Juzoor for Health and Social Development, and international organizations like Oxfam, Save the Children, among others. More training sessions were also held by the networks and coalitions where the institution is a member, such as the Arab Network for Child Rights "Manara".

The training topics were wide and varied, from project management topics, such as monitoring and evaluation, to the best practices of partnerships and compliance with mandatory policies, including safeguarding and fraud

prevention. Trainees also got themselves engaged in the workshops of some media-related topics, such as digital safety, and human rights like women and girls with disabilities regarding case management meetings, national referral systems, adolescent health, and more.

It is important to note that most of the trainings took place at the national level, face-to-face or virtually, except for one: a 5-day training in Jordan on the right to sexual and reproductive health for adolescents.

The media officer also took part in the coordination, mobilization, and coverage of over 20 activities by and for the institution and its volunteers, most of them in the Hebron area as part of the work of youth accountability teams. The average attendance at these events was approximately about 50 participants, 35% of them being persons with disabilities. The events were covered, and local media were invited to attend.

The media officer further carried out training for the participants on managing platforms, cybersecurity, basic photography, and video editing as far as social media is concerned. It was conducted over 10 hours and was held at the institution's headquarters in Beit Jala, through the Leadership Academy alumni forum "Salalem". A similar training was replicated with partner CBOs within the project for enhancing local capacities in community development. This time, 25 representatives from partner organizations were participants.

In 2023, together with Global Initiatives, through the campaign "Hamla," the facility carried out an internal and external vulnerability assessment. Questionnaires were administered to all the staff members, and a report was prepared based on the responses received to assess the internal environment at the facility, specifically addressing the approach of the facility towards crisis management.

Participation in Workshops and Conferences

During the reporting period, the staff of QADER participated in 36 workshops and conferences organized by local and international units, including civil society organizations, human rights institutions, research centers, coalitions, networks, and others.

The nature of these workshops varied, including roundtable discussions, focus groups, regional workshops, consultative sessions, briefings, and presentations of studies and research.

The topics addressed in these workshops and conferences covered advocacy and demands, such as discussions on the executive regulations for organizing civil service for persons with disabilities, civil society monitoring of government performance, the Family Protection Law from Violence, and the right to unionize, among others. Other workshops focused on humanitarian and civil work topics, such as safe programming in humanitarian response, work priorities and coordination in facing challenges, in addition to the narrowing of spaces for civil society work. QADER also participated in preparatory work, such as preparing the second shadow report for the CEDAW Committee and preparations for the World Social Forum, among others.

Publications and Researches

During the reporting period, the institution prepared an analytical report for the fourth draft of the new Disability Rights Law. The content of the report involved gap identification and recommendations to realign the law to the mandates as provided by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as a reference framework. It also covered recommendations related to the proposed mechanisms that were to be developed to ensure effective implementation and their accountability. The report was channeled through the Cabinet for review, with the institution following up on the progress about the review process being made which is done in preparation for the law's approval.

Media

By 2023, the organization was able to sustain all its media plans and effectively get its message across on all media platforms, which is provable by the increase in the numbers of followers on its social media pages. The

most that could be done was that by the close of 2023, Gaza underwent an attack of extraordinary military assault. At that moment, the institution had to redirect its media strategy, making sure it gives proper coverage documentation of violations against persons with disabilities specifically and in general the residents of Gaza, cite press releases and inform the local and international communities about the violations being perpetrated against Palestinians, particularly the marginalized groups of women, children, and persons with disabilities.

As part of the "Partner Capacity Building" that some of our partners offer, we are in the process of developing, under a major output for the institution years 2023–2025, a new media strategy that aligns with our strategic goals.

The most essential media achievements of the institution were 130 Facebook posts, 100 Instagram posts, of which 27 were activity coverage posts by the institution, 8 video materials, and 25 designs. There were also stories posted, amounting to 201 on Instagram and Facebook. The content shared on social media belonged to both pre-arranged activities and a series arranged rapidly because of the conflict in Gaza. The fact that Instagram followers increased by 12% and Facebook followers increased by 16% is worth mentioning.

Throughout the year, about 14 publications were developed and printed, which include 3 studies and manuals, 5 brochures, and other materials that were distributed across the West Bank during the activities of the institution. Among the most important publications was a study under the title "The Reality of Persons with Disabilities in Palestine: Challenges and Proposed Solutions," prepared by Dr. Essam Abidin. It was launched in Ramallah in a meeting that was well attended, with about 55 people.

Challenges

One of the main challenges faced by the institution during the reporting period was related to the impact of the Israeli occupation's aggression on the Gaza Strip, which was accompanied by restrictions on freedom of movement and travel across the West Bank. This resulted in the need to pause or change intervention plans to align with the national context's priorities. Additionally, there was uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the institution's funding sources, as some donors' positions aligned with their countries' support for the occupying government.

Another challenge was related to the safety of the institution's staff and volunteers, particularly those living outside the Bethlehem Governorate. This led the institution's management to significantly reduce in-person office attendance at the institution's main headquarters. Despite successfully managing these challenges and risks, this forced the institution's management to significantly reduce the in-person working hours at the institution's main headquarters.

This section of the report outlines the challenges faced by the institution and its response. Regarding the limitation of movement and mobility, which prevented the implementation of interventions as originally planned, the institution acted quickly at the outbreak of the war to review and modify all its plans, adjusting timelines and implementation mechanisms while considering the safety of staff and participants. Some interventions were carried out remotely, while others that could not be executed remotely were rescheduled to a later phase, extending the timelines by two to three months. The institution maintained close communication with donors, informing them of the changes and justifications, while continuously monitoring political developments and related forecasts to base their emergency planning on these indicators.

Additionally, the institution developed interventions that were not originally planned but emerged as a response to the new emergency needs. In the West Bank, due to closures, military checkpoints, and restrictions on movement, the institution intensified its activities aimed at ensuring women and children with disabilities had access to protection services, as they could not reach these services due to the military closures. The institution also launched awareness campaigns about the free helpline it operates and conducted media awareness

campaigns focusing on protection issues, especially for women and girls with disabilities. In Gaza, the institution launched awareness campaigns highlighting the reality of persons with disabilities during the war and initiated a process to document the violations against persons with disabilities in the Strip while monitoring their urgent needs.

Regarding funding, as a proactive step to avoid reduced funding for the institution, it intensified efforts to diversify its funding sources and explore self-funding options. Furthermore, the institution reached out to potential partners whose countries support the Palestinian cause, urging them to expedite the establishment of partnerships, especially given the institution's increasing need to respond to rising demands.

Partners and Supporters

