Thanks to the generous support of the Finnish Federation of the Visually Impaired (FFVI), BASR equipped the existing resource unit for students with disabilities at Bethlehem University (BU) with up-to-date computers, screen readers (Arabic & English), Hal supernova with Speech & Braille, Close Circuit TV (CCTV) software to transform text material into audio materials, in addition to optical devices. This up-to-date technology aims at facilitating the access of students with visual impairment to information and study materials.

Following the opening, two ICT training courses were organized by BASR, both led by Mr Erkki Suorlahti, Senior ICT Supervisor at the FFVI. The first course took place at BASR and was attended by 6 ICT teachers from 3 schools for the visually impaired in the West Bank in addition to BASR’s vision rehabilitation instructors. The other training course took place at Bethlehem University and was attended by 6 staff members from BU (4 IT persons, 1 technical person responsible for the resource unit for students with disabilities and one Occupational therapy lecturer).
The two training courses focused on “computing with special software used by people with visual impairment”. The training covered different topics including: the type of Windows settings that may be useful and valuable for any user with low vision, the type of software solutions – commercial products and freeware – that are in the market, the basic skills that a person with visual impairment needs to learn to use computers, and the basic options when using zooming and screen reader Windows settings or Supernova Magnifier and Screen Reader with MS Office Word or some other software such as Outlook Express, Outlook, Windows Live Mail, Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Opera. The training emphasized the difference in the way sighted and unsighted people use computers.

At the end of the training, the participants expressed great interest in transferring what they had learned in the training sessions to their colleagues in order to help students with impaired vision make the greatest benefit possible from their learning experience at school or at the university.