With the generous support of CBM, BASR’s empowerment and capacity building program targeted 64 people with disabilities in Teqou’ in the Bethlehem district and Dura and Ithna in the Hebron district, who were organized in three self-help groups, in addition to 79 family members of people with disabilities and interested community members in Teqou’ and Hussan in the Bethlehem district and Dura, Ithna and Kharas in the Hebron district, who were organized in five advocacy groups. These are underprivileged villages in the Bethlehem and Hebron districts that are remote from central services, where people with disabilities are marginalized and lack knowledge and awareness of their rights, where no self-help groups established, no DPO’s or any organized work to improve the status of people with disabilities and their families neither by government nor by civil society organizations.

The program dealt with such topics as community awareness and mobilization, communication skills, UNCRPD and national legislation, advocacy and lobbying, access to services as well as with the recommendations of the Disability Monitor Initiative report on “Ensuring Access to Social Services in the Middle East”. As a result of the program, the knowledge / awareness of the participating persons with disabilities of their rights increased as well as their self confidence.
and self esteem. They were proud of their accomplishments as a group as they implemented some small-scale advocacy initiatives and were able and confident enough to advocate their rights in order to improve their life conditions.

“Although I am old, I feel I began to accomplish things for the benefit of people with disabilities through our activities. I really want to continue being part of such a training which put us at the beginning of the road and motivated us to work more and more to change the reality that persons with disabilities experience.”, said Salem (with impaired vision) from Ithna.

“This training is essential to raise awareness in our communities. A Person with a disability is a citizen with equal rights and responsibilities like a person without disability; having equal opportunities is a must. I tell people about our rights, reality and the hardships we face through my poetry.”, said Abu Mahmood (with total vision loss) from Dura, after his performance in The Second Palestine Festival of Creativity of people with disabilities.

“This training increased my knowledge about the rights of women with disabilities and their right to participate in various fields like other women. As a result of our pressure on the women’s center in our village, I became a member of the administrative board of the Center and we are currently organizing some activities involving women with disabilities.”, said Waseelah (with physical disability) from Teqou’.

“The training increased our knowledge in many things related to our rights as persons with
disabilities and that we have the greatest role in educating individuals, groups and governmental institutions to understand issues which face people with disabilities and the importance of implementing the Palestinian law on the rights of people with disabilities No. 4/1999." Said Bassam (with physical disability) from Dura.

To celebrate the success of their activities on the international Day of People with disabilities and the end of the empowerment and capacity building program for 2011, BASR organized a trip to Jericho for 130 members of the self-help and advocacy groups. The groups enjoyed the sunny day, the instrumental music performance and the poems written by people with disabilities. These events are becoming more and more effective in creating an informal platform, where people can exchange experiences, ideas and suggestions on how to enhance the work of self-help groups and generate effective methods for creating a more “disability aware” and “inclusive” community.

The groups expressed their happiness and appreciation for the empowerment opportunity and support offered by BASR and its partner, CBM, which empowered them to go out in their communities to demand their rights. BASR will continue to support these groups with the clear goal to turn them into successful role models and agents of change and will hopefully replicate the experience in new areas in 2012.