



Menara Centre for Special Needs Children

A MINISTRY OF THE EPISCOPAL / ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF EGYPT

JULY - DECEMBER 2012

OVERVIEW OF THE CENTRE

In Egypt, children with special needs are often left at home and their education is ignored.

The Menara ("Lighthouse") Centre offers the opportunity for 40 special needs children to learn and gain life skills.

The centre is located in Menouf, a city in the Nile Delta, about 150kms north of Cairo.

The vision of the centre is to assist children with special needs to become self-reliant.

The centre does this through:

- Academic education.
- Integration in the community.
- Physiotherapy
- Speech therapy
- Vocational training
- Educating parents
- Raising awareness in the wider society

Speech Therapy

Marwa is the speech therapist at the Menara Centre. She spends 30 minutes with each child twice a week to assist them with speaking. She shares below about her work.

"When a student first arrives at the Menara Centre, I test their speaking and comprehension level. Based on this test, they are placed in the class appropriate for the level. The teacher then observes the child, and makes an individual plan for the child. For speech therapy, this could be comprehension of basic vocabulary, or their ability to vocalise different sounds.

For children who come with no speech, the first step is learning to breathe in and out, and make sounds using this breathing. The children

learn to understand new words, such as body parts, numbers, and fruit. Once they comprehend basic words, they learn how to



pronounce them. They learn letter by letter, starting with the easiest letters first. For some letters, I use honey to help them place their tongue or lips in the right place to make the sound.

When a child can say one word, then they practise saying two words together. I then start to teach them

grammar, and putting a sentence together. They then practise short stories.

The children at the Menara Centre have different disabilities, which provides different obstacles for learning to speak. The children with Down's Syndrome have an enlarged tongue which sometimes hangs outside their mouth. Those with cerebral palsy have difficulty moving their muscles or lips. Others need minor surgery.

I have worked at the Menara Centre for five years. The most rewarding part of my work is when a child starts to learn to speak. This gives me a real sense of achievement."

Ahmed Gomah

When Ahmed started attending the Menara Centre, he didn't know how to speak at all. We started to teach him how to breathe in and out and massaging. After some time, he learnt to understand some basic words, and then how to pronounce the letters. Next, he learnt how to put these sounds

together to say words, and then to join the words in a sentence. Ahmed is now 11 years old, and he has made great progress. He is now learning how to tell a story with pictures, with four different events happening. Ahmed's family are so happy that they can now communicate more with him.



Ahmed and his sister Amil

Free Medical Treatment



Harpur Memorial Hospital in Menouf

The children who attend the Menara Centre receive free medical treatment at Harpur Memorial Hospital in Menouf.

This hospital has been serving the community in Menouf for over 100 years. It is also a ministry of the Episcopal / Anglican Diocese of Egypt.

The Menara Centre provides each family with a permission card, and the child can receive free treatment at any time. They also receive a 25% discount of medicine and lab investigations.

This is a great support to the families, as special needs chil-

dren require more medical treatment than other children, and this can add a big financial burden to the families.



Visit of Engineering Students

A group of students from the Faculty of Engineering at Menoufia University recently visited the Menara Centre.

They organised games for the children, brought presents, and did a puppet show. The children made a

show for the students and parents.

One of the goals of the Menara Centre is to help the children integrate into the community. This type of visit helps to build bridges with the wider community, and gives the children a fun day.



May Mohamed Afefe

May has Down's Syndrome, is hyper-active and is not able to speak well. She is 9 years old, and has three siblings including a twin sister.

She entered school in the neighbouring town of Shabeen el Kom. However, the centre has few facilities and teachers, and was not providing a good level of education. Then her family heard about and visited the Menara Centre. They admired the standard of education and the different services provided such as physiotherapy, speech, gym and education. They felt that the centre cared for the children and treated all of them with love.

When May first came to the school she used to throw or push things when she wanted to move them. She didn't have good communication with her friends or the teachers. She wouldn't sit in her chair through a lesson. She was unable to hold equipment like pencils in her hands. She would not eat during meal time but instead would throw her food or her drink.

May was placed in the class for children with multiple disabilities. After testing her abilities, the staff created an individual

learning plan for her specific needs. This plan aimed to modify her behaviour, develop self sufficiency and improve her social skills. May has succeeded in achieving the following goals;

Modify her behaviour

- Sit at a chair for 10 minutes without standing up.
- Participate in the morning role call and exercise.
- Imitate the teacher through exercises to increase her focus.
- Knock on the door before she enters a room.
- Point at different parts of the body.
- Move objects from place to place without throwing them.

Self sufficiency

- Hold a sandwich and eat it by herself.
- Hold a cup and drink out of it by herself.



“Her progress has greatly encouraged us as we see her taking small steps.”

Social Skills

- Shake hands with her friends
- Wave goodbye when she leaves

The staff have worked hard with May to help her reach these goals. Her progress has greatly encouraged us as we see her taking small steps.

We continue to work with May and her family. We regularly share the goals for her education with her family so that they can help her at home to work toward independence.

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Working with the Parents

One of the important roles of the Menara Centre is to provide support for the parents of special needs children.

The teacher meets with each parent once a week to discuss the learning objectives for the child. Each child has an individual learning plan and it is important for the family to

reinforce the learning gained at the Menara Centre.

The staff from the centre also visit the children in their homes. The parents also often come on school trips. In addition, there is a monthly meeting at the Menara Centre for all the parents.



Dina Ahmed Mohamed Sami



Dina is a 13 year old girl with Cerebral Palsy. When she enrolled at the centre at four years of age, she was very nervous and quick to be angry, especially when there were loud noises like car horns. She would often hit her friends, throw things, yell and make loud noises. She would break things that were in the

classroom and glare at people. When she came to the centre she didn't know when to stop eating. She would continue to eat without stopping and she would even bite herself when the staff tried to make her stop.

After working with her and her family over the past nine years, she has changed a lot. She doesn't make violent reactions, even if there are loud noises. It makes us happy that she can now imitate the car horns without becoming agitated! She is able to eat slowly and knows when it is time to stop eating. Dina is better at listening to and responding to orders. Even if she has a new teacher she listens to them.

She concentrates well on the lessons in class, and knows the differences between colours, shapes and the days of the week. She has also learnt the difference between vegetables, fruits, classroom objects, and objects in her home. She is able to throw things away when she has finished with them, how to

cross the road with care, and how to wash her hands.

We are very proud of the children who make progress while they are with us. We are also proud of the parents who co-operate with us to work with their children. We are proud of the programs that we have, especially for those who have multiple disabilities and with the parents who are learning through our centre.

The most encouraging thing is when we have a child who arrives not being able to speak, but through our speech program they improve their speech and interact with other people. This makes us very happy.

“Please continue to pray for our centre so that we can serve more children and continue to show them the love of God through our program and our staff.”



Contact Details

The Menara Centre is thankful for the partners who support the centre financially and through prayer. Please continue to pray that the centre will show the love of God to the children and their families.

The Menara Centre needs to raise an additional \$12,300 USD to cover the 2013 expenses of the school. Although the fees recently increased, it is difficult for families to pay for the full running costs of the special needs school, which requires more staff than a standard school.

For more information about the Menara Centre, please contact:

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