

## **BUS OF HOPE project**

Project's RC Host : RC Zahle Bekaa

Purpose: Acquisition of a bus

Location: Zahlé, Lebanon, Bekaa

### **About Ray of Hope**

Ray of Hope is a charity association that is officially approved by the Lebanese government under the number 48/AD from the 17th April 2000

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### **The beneficiaries**

The 185 permanent beneficiaries of Ray of Hope are children, teenagers and adults who attend the centre 5 days a week. They present diverse types of disabilities (mild or profound intellectual impairment, trisomy 21, movement and cerebral impairment, autism, troubled development.

In addition, the centre hosts occasional beneficiaries:

- \* about 30 people individually followed a few hours a week in psychomotricity, speech therapy, physiotherapy, psychiatry, psychology
- \* young people participating in mixed activities (open air center, Saturday club, twinning with schools and school integration
- \* parents and families of the persons who are hosted by Ray of Hope

### **The goals and the ways of the association**

\* Develop the mental and physical abilities of our beneficiaries and ensure the development of their emotional and relational personality by offering:

- Medical and paramedical care
  - Specialized education
  - School education
- \* Promote their integration into society thanks to:
- professional training
  - continued collaboration with classic schools to integrate or maintain students with disabilities in these places
  - participation in movements and projects of other associations

## **Main activities**

- \* The Institute operates during the school year, Monday to Friday, from 8:00 to 15:00. Students are divided into ten independent classes of distinct levels
- \* Summer camps are organized. These include a mixed center with children from ordinary schools for social inclusion
- \* Individualized paramedical support (speech therapy, physiotherapy and psychomotricity)
- \* The "Saturday club" offers a wide range of workshops (painting, music, sports, theater, computer science, but also discovering of citizenship, ...). It is aimed to a mixed population (the brothers and sisters of our students) with the goal of a better integration of young people with special needs
- \* The agricultural project within the center is dedicated to our 50 students aged from 18 to 40. They are thus oriented towards professional activities and give sense to their future by developing biological fruit and vegetable cultivation.
- \* Workshops allowing teenagers and adults to practice culinary, craft and artistic activities
- \* The "young-club" provides training for young people aged 18 to 30, who in turn participate in our activities
- \* The listening center is for parents, especially moms. It provides medical assistance, a space for sharing and psycho-social support

## **Projects**

- \* "The shop of hope" will allow us to train some adults to commercial professions, by the semi-autonomous management of a store. They will develop professional skills by selling the products from the workshops and from the agricultural project.
- \* The development of cooking workshops and of a canteen
- \* The construction of a new center for the association

## **High need of the nus**

### ***Why?***

The movements in the Bekaa are very complex for everyone: no train, no organized public transport. If they do not have their own vehicle, The Lebanese must move in collective vans, without fixed prices and schedules.

All Lebanese schools are served by private minibuses, which transport their students living nearby.

Since Ray of Hope's opening, its activity has grown continuously, increasing the number of beneficiaries and attracting more and more distant students. Unfortunately, we only have one 14-seats minibus for the center.

Parents sometimes keep their children with special needs at home because of the lack of transports.

Sometimes they use the aforementioned transports, but must accompany their children on these long journeys, which are inaccessible to lacking-autonomy persons. The cost is then high in money and time.

Sometimes, students use the transport of other schools, which implies schedules that do not correspond to those of our structure. This imposes on us phased arrivals and departures, which is not very conducive to a good organization of our activities.

Drivers are not always able to transport children with disabilities, they are sometimes afraid or do not know how to react to the fear of our students. Parents do not trust. This situation causes physical and psychological discomfort.

### ***Geographical areas***

35 beneficiaries live in North Bekaa (up to 80 kilometers from the structure)

115 beneficiaries live around Zahlé (from 5 to 80 kilometers from the structure)

35 beneficiaries live in the west and south of the Bekaa (up to 50 kilometers from the structure)

The acquisition of a bus would also allow the Association to develop school trips throughout Lebanon, which further increases the geographical area concerned by the project. Thus, all beneficiaries of the center will benefit from this project.

### ***Expected results***

- Allow everyone to reach the center, regardless of money, time, type of disability
- Offer a better service to our beneficiaries
- Improve the organization of activities and the educational output of the center, by stopping arrivals and departures staggered (from 6:15 to 9:15 in the morning and from 12:15 to 15:00 at noon)
- Improve the transport quality of children and adults by reducing travel time, thus reducing children's tiredness and drowsiness. Also reduce the discomfort of transportation, a source of rejection and absenteeism
- Respect safety standards during transport, including the presence of a specialized educator to handle delicate situations, crises and avoid the risk of abuse against this fragile population
- Decrease the cost of transportation for the center and families (50 to 100% decrease depending on the level of poverty of families)
- Develop educational and cultural activities outside, often limited by the lack of adapted transport

In short, the granting of a bus would provide our beneficiaries with an opportunity to arrive in time and to move safely between the center and their home (Real need of 2 buses and the RC of Zahle Bekaa wants to ensure only one bus)