EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Save a Child's Heart (SACH) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the House of Commons Select Committee inquiry on the UK’s Development Work in the Middle East. SACH is an international, non-governmental, non-political, non-profit organization founded in 1996 in Holon, Israel at the Wolfson Medical Centre (WMC) with the mission of improving the quality of paediatric cardiac care for children from low to lower-middle income countries suffering from rheumatic and congenital heart disease and creating centres of competence in these countries. SACH is fully dedicated to the idea that every child deserves the best medical treatment available, regardless of the child's nationality, religion, race, gender or financial situation. Due to the fact that over 50% of the children, who receive cardiac care from SACH, reside in the West Bank and Gaza, it is of significance for SACH to respond to this inquiry.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. Save a Child's Heart (SACH) is an Israeli based international humanitarian nongovernmental organization providing life-saving heart surgery and follow-up care for children from the West Bank, Gaza and many low to lower-middle income countries within Africa, Asia and other parts of the Middle East. SACH strives to improve the quality of paediatric cardiac care for children from around the world suffering from rheumatic and congenital heart disease. The organizational efforts provide holistic cardiac care that encompasses evaluation, diagnoses, treatment and follow-up of each patient while simultaneously creating centres of medical competence in low to lower-middle income countries that enables local physicians to treat patients within their own communities.

2. SACH, with Special Consultative Status under the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), is a hospital-based project offering all of its varied services in cooperation with the Wolfson Medical Centre (WMC) in Holon, Israel. Since its inception in 1996, the organization has operated on over 3,300 children, from 48 different countries, suffering from heart disease with Palestinian children representing over 1,600 of these operations.

3. SACH’s mission is accomplished by:
   - **Bringing children in need of heart surgery, to Israel, whose countries have a lack of knowledge and necessary infrastructure to provide lifesaving cardiac care** – SACH has treated over 3,300 children suffering from congenital and rheumatic heart disease aging from infancy to 18 years of age who reside in 48 countries where adequate medical care is unavailable.
   - **Giving in-depth postgraduate training to medical personnel from low to lower-middle income countries at the WMC** – SACH has trained over 90 physicians and nurses from partnering countries at the WMC, an affiliate of the Sackler School of Medicine at Tel Aviv University. The training programme is recognized by the MASHAV department at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs as conforming to aims for teaching self-help.
• Travelling to low or lower-middle income countries in order to evaluate pre- and post-operative patients, together with local personnel in joint cardiology clinics, operate on patients together with local physicians and offer onsite training in various fields of paediatric cardiac care. SACH has evaluated more than 8,000 children in different locations both in Israel and abroad. SACH has also completed 16 teaching missions overseas, performing more than 200 life-saving surgeries alongside local personnel.

4. SACH gives credence to the idea that every child deserves the best medical treatment available, regardless of the child’s nationality, religion, race, gender or financial status. While around 44% of SACH’s patients come from countries outside of the Middle East, the other 56% comprise mainly Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza as well as a minority of Iraqis, Jordanians and most recently Syrians due to the ensuing civil war. Cooperative efforts, related to cardiac care for children, have existed for over 15 years between SACH medical staff in Israel and Palestinian cardiologists in the West Bank and Gaza.

5. In order to – support the development of the Palestinian Authority’s healthcare system in the West Bank, SACH established a medical initiative bringing together Palestinian and Israeli medical personnel while simultaneously maintaining the holistic cardiac care provided to Palestinian children since SACH’s inception. The initiative involved building *bridges of peace* between the two societies under the Heart of the Matter Program.

6. The formal establishment of this program also helped institute the relationship between SACH and the Palestinian Ministry of Health (PMOH) with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on February 13, 2012. The MOU provides formalization of the cooperation between SACH and the PMOH, co-sponsorship of PMOH in the treatment of Palestinian children and approval of the training program by the PMOH, therefore ensuring the creation of a National Centre of Cardiac Excellence based in Ramallah.

7. Relevant Facts to consider
   • To date 1,877 children from the Palestinian Authority, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco and most recently Syria have received life-saving cardiac care. The majority receiving care are Palestinian with a representation of over 1,600 children.
   • Over 6,000 Palestinian children have been examined at SACH’s weekly free cardiology clinic at the WMC.
   • Twenty-one Palestinian physicians and three Palestinian nurses have participated in SACH Outreach Training programs.

8. The Heart of the Matter Program maintains two intrinsic aspects to its design; it preserves collaborative efforts between Palestinian and Israeli medical staff through the provision of cardiac care to Palestinian children and provides an outreach training program for up to five years for physicians and nurses from the Palestinian Authority. The capacity building efforts of the program include Palestinian doctors and nurses working alongside Israeli medical personnel to treat Palestinian children coming to the WMC for cardiac care and being significantly involved with medical assessments at the weekly Palestinian cardiology clinic. The end result of these capacity building efforts includes the creation of a National Centre of Cardiac Excellence based in Ramallah and the purchase of much needed medical equipment for the WMC and PMOH.

9. Consequently, the programs’ capacity building efforts not only impact the direct beneficiaries (children receiving cardiac care and Palestinian and Israeli medical personnel involved in the program) but also larger groups such as the 200 Palestinian and Israeli medical personnel cooperatively working to help these children, dozens of government and organizational officials involved with the PMOH and SACH, the 4,000 Israeli and Palestinian family members of patients intermingling at the WMC and the subsequent 20,000 extended family members interacting with these beneficiaries.
10. The program currently receives support from diverse international and local government entities such as the EU Partnership for Peace, USAID, Israeli Ministry for Regional Cooperation and Palestinian Ministry of Health. Furthermore SACH UK was established in London to represent SACH locally in fundraising campaigns and raising the organization's profile. SACH UK also receives the patronage of the Conservative Friends of Israel member, Robert Halfon M.P. Rotary International Great Britain and Ireland (RIBI) has also included SACH in their library of international projects as it accords with the Rotary object of the advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service. With the support of these agencies SACH has created joint activities between Israelis and Palestinians from a grassroots level (providing cardiac care to children and training to doctors) into an institutionalized framework that ensures that Palestinian children suffering from rheumatic and congenital heart disease can receive treatment from local physicians within their community.

THOUGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Save a Child’s Heart is a non-profit health organization conducting cross-border tangible activities on a day to day basis, engaging both professionals and lay people throughout Palestinian and Israeli societies. These activities help to improve the quality of the lives of our respective societies and inevitably create dialogues as well as build bridges for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. SACH is one of a group of non-profit organizations operating in different fields such as education, environment, agriculture and others creating dialogue through tangible activities,  
12. The Heart of the Matter program is a capacity building project where both sides, Palestinian and Israeli, share a vested interest in ensuring the successful treatment and care of Palestinian children suffering from heart disease regardless of the political climate and larger conflict affecting both societies.  
13. The Heart of the Matter program (and other non-profit programs promoting a common interest) fosters mutual understanding through interaction and dialogue at the grassroots level, and cooperation between organizations and government agencies at the institutional level. Evidence of this includes the MOU signed between SACH and the PMOH.  
14. While promoting dialogue and analysis is important, it should not constitute the essence of all programs related to solving the conflict. The documentation and evidence contained within this reply demonstrate the benefit of supporting those organizations and agencies that provide opportunities for on the ground capacity building initiatives between Israelis and Palestinians.

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