



Arabikansojen ystävyyssseura (AKYS)
Finnish-Arab Friendship Society (FAFS)

Report 3/ 2017

How are our
sponsored
children?

A review on the social
workers annual reports
in 2016.

Prepared by Sirkku Kivistö, Marja Winter, Irja Kandolin

CONTENT

Family Happiness – the flagship project p.2, Co-operation in the program today between BAS and FAFS p.2, Economic situation of the families sponsored through Family Happiness –program p. 3, Children's resilience despite the adverse circumstances p.4, Sponsorshisp money helps the children to participate in BAS activities p.4, Thank you p.5, Report serie of FAFS p. 5

Beirut, Copenhagen, Helsinki 28.1.2017

WWW.AKYS.ORG, WWW.FACEBOOK.ORG/AKYSTIEDOTUS

Family Happiness – the flagship project

This is a review of the work in the sponsorship program during the year 2016. It is based on the local social workers' individual written reports describing the situation of each sponsored child. This year we are especially looking into the challenging economical situation the sponsored children and their families are facing and highlighting how the Family Happiness -program helps the families cope with and sometimes work around these challenges.

The idea behind the Family Happiness Program of Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS) is to support the children and their families living in the UNRWA refugee camps in Lebanon who are most in need of economic support or family guidance. This is described on their web page:

“The Family Happiness Project started in 1984 since the beginning of the main element of care giving for the whole family that with the support of all sponsors provides a margin of protection and guidance for our children. It represents our flagship project, from which all other projects have emerged. The holistic approach to development implemented for this project involves a sponsorship program, social services, and educational opportunities, while maintaining a focus on the family unity.”

The sponsorship program promotes the implementation of civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights as they are laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). It also promotes the human security aspect of development aid. This basically states that peace and security relies on meeting the basic life needs of all individuals in the society, as described in the UNDP report of 1994. In practice this relief is seen as essential to security within the state and it includes seven-pronged approach to address economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security – many of the steps that the social worker reports describe as well.

Co-operation in the program today between BAS and FAFS



Beit Atfal Assumoud



Finnish-Arab Friendship Society

Co-operation in the program today between BAS and FAFS

The co-operation between Finnish-Arab Friendship Society (FAFS) and the Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS) sponsorship program has now been running for 34 years. In 1997 the sponsorship program expanded to include kindergarten children and in 2014 expanded again to include elderly Palestinians.

Today through FAFS, 46 children of 35 families (boys 54 % and girls 46 % have sponsors from Finland. In addition, since the families often have more children that are indirectly supported, a total of 134 children are benefitted by the program. FAFS belongs to a large network of BAS donors, which sponsors a total of 1104 Palestinian children living in Lebanon (PRL) and 115 children escaped from Syria (PRS).

The 46 children who are sponsored through FAFS live in the following camps: Bourj el-Barajneh 6, Shatila 12, Mar Elias 2, Nahr el-Bared 8, Beddawi 2, Ein el-Helweh 6, Rashidieh 3, Bourj el-Shemali 4, El Buss 2 and Baalbeck 1. The children and their families are taken care of by eighteen social workers all in all.

Table 1: The age distribution of sponsored children was 2016

Age group, years	Number of children (n=46)
2-5	4
6-12	23
13-15	13
16-18	4
Over 18	2

Most of the sponsored children are in the age of elementary grades (1-6 classes, age 6-12 years) of the Lebanese education system.

Economic situation of the families sponsored through Family Happiness program

The Finnish sponsors pay 30 €/month and the families get monthly 30,000 LL to cover the needs of the child. A further amount of 7500 LL is used towards the expenses of the activities and programs organised for parents and children. Another 7500 LL is used to cover part of the salary of the social workers taking care of the family.

After a family is approved to have a child sponsored, the social worker arranges with the parents to come to the center on a monthly basis to receive the financial assistance. When in the program, the family gets access to the social workers' guidance in a variety of practical areas, such as health awareness and education.

The United Nations' Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is responsible and provides the funding for the basic education services, free-of-charge primary and secondary health care services and house renovation programs for the refugees living in the area.

This funding is often not enough to cover the costs for the families living in the camps, especially in situations where there are some special needs in the families as described in the examples below.

It becomes clear in the social workers evaluations on the reports that the sponsored children and their families are deeply depending on the sponsorship money and often they are in need of additional assistance and income as well, as described in one of the reports:

“The family depends on UNRWA financial aids (10 USD monthly), BAS financial aids for two children and the mother's income through her work as a cleaning lady in a kindergarten in the camp (100 USD monthly), but these incomes aren't enough to secure the family's daily needs and the costs of treatment of the son and his sister in addition to the mother's medication.”

Some of the sponsored families have a lot of costs and debts to cover due to the high cost of special health care:

“The economic situation of the family is too bad, and what the family gets is not enough to ensure even their daily needs. The father isn't able to work due to his bad health situation; he suffers from diabetes, heart problems and high blood pressure. The mother suffers from breast cancer, she finished her chemotherapy and now she takes radiotherapy, she needs 30 sessions, and this is too expensive on the family. The mother, and despite her health situation, she always attends the mothers meeting and other activities organized at the center.”

To increase the well being of the family, money is also needed for education and reconstruction of the house:

“The children have difficulties in learning. They need care and attention to help them understand the subjects and pass their exams successfully. The monthly salary of the remedial teacher is hard for the parents with the little income of the family that's why the teacher doesn't always help the children.”

The bread winners in the families are seriously under-employed. About fathers' work status in 30 %

of reports there was no information, 33 % were at work, 37 % not, and 13 % of mothers had some work, all in low-paid or day by day work.

It was described in the reports that despite the difficulties the families are facing, the families, especially the children and the mother are participating in the activities of BAS activity centers and getting guidance on how to cope with their situation. In one case, a social worker mentioned how the sponsor provided the child and the siblings with toys, which are well dedicated to the children's situation.

Children's resilience despite the adverse circumstances

The Family Happiness -data show three groups of children, divided according to their school performance: 1/3 very good or good, 1/3 fair and 1/3 with learning difficulties and needing tutoring. More than 4/5 of children were diligent in their schoolwork – those who were not were only so because of acute chaos in their family situation. In addition, two thirds of the children participate in extra-curricular activities in BAS-centers, like some parents in awareness-raising and peer-support activities.

“The success of the daughter in the official exams of grade nine provided the family with a feeling of joy.”

This positive overall picture about the resilience of the children is remarkable when you take into account their living conditions:

- Many children themselves have acute (20 %) or chronic (41 %) health problems.
- So do the parents - 67 % of fathers and 46 % of mothers – mental health problems in several cases.
- The home itself is in poor condition. Directly “unhealthy” in 51 % cases, narrow, some lacking daylight, often having humidity problems and poor furniture.
- In 58% of cases the family situation was described as “stressful.” According to the social workers, 43 % of families are in need of follow-up on all levels.
- In the social workers' own remarks, the economic situation (58 %), health problems (50 %) and need of dealing with the extended family issues (27 %) were highlighted.

Sponsorship money helps the children participate in BAS activities

As described above, a part of the sponsorship money is used for organising activities in the centers. Beit Atfal Assumoud has activity centers in 10 refugee camps in Lebanon. The sponsored children are invited to participate in these activities together with their families. They are designed for the children to learn new skills and have the opportunity to meet other children.

In most of the cases (35) it is reported that the child participates in these activities. BAS centers offer quite a large array of activities, in which the children can take part. Here are some examples of them:

*By hands: handicraft, embroidery, making clothes, drawing, painting, playing (9)

* Physical hobbies: dabke-dance, football, biking, swimming (6)

* Outdoor hobbies: recreational activities, celebrations: summer activities, watching cartoons, scouts, trips, national celebrations (12)

* Educational hobbies: health awareness, awareness raising, psycho-social support groups, life skills to deal with him/herself, peer education groups in reproductive health, remedial classes, tutoring help (13)

The obstacles for participation mentioned in the reports were: severe health problems (autism, mental & physical differences, hospitalization, need of personal guidance and counseling), young age (under 6 years), domestic situation (helps mother, plays with siblings) and distance from home (no transportation). In these situations, the social workers try to arrange some possibilities to participate, e.g. to summer activities, national celebrations etc.

It is important to acknowledge though, that the parents can benefit from group meetings despite the child not being able to participate in activities. In some reports it was also mentioned that the mother of the family is participating in these meetings and awareness sessions, even if the father is ill. This will make the family stronger in regards to facing the illness as well.

Thank you

We want to thank Beit Atfal Assumoud, the social workers in the camps, and the coordinator of the sponsorship program, Ms Fatima Khaizaran for the successful cooperation.

All the additional input social workers write in the reports, own remarks, is very important info for us. It was also a nice surprise to see pictures attached to the reports, which we hope to see in the future too.



Report serie of FAFS

Raportti 1/2017 Lapsi perheneuvolan potilaana – yhteistyö perheen ja koulun kanssa tulosten edellytyksenä. Kehitysyhteistyöhankkeen seurantakäynti. 28.1. 2017

Raportti 2/2017 Mitä kummimaksut merkitsevät palestiinalaisperheille? Miten kummitukea käytetään? 28.1.2017

Report 3/2017 How are our sponsored children? A review on the social workers' annual reports 28th Jan 2017