

Finnish-Arab Friendship Society FAFS (Arabikansojen Ystävyysseura, AKYS) in cooperation with Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS, The National Institution of Social Care) sponsorship programme



**Arabikansojen ystävyysseura (AKYS)**  
*Finnish-Arab Friendship Society (FAFS)*

## **REPORT 1/2019**

# **An Overview of Sponsorship Cooperation in 2018**

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## **An overview of sponsorship cooperation in 2018**

Report 1/2019, prepared by Suvi Virtanen, Sirkku Kivistö, Krista Igbarria (English language consultation), Helsinki, in cooperation with Fatima Khaizaran, coordinator of sponsorship programme, Beirut, February 2019

**Partners:** The National Institution for Social Care and Vocational Training (NISCVT), commonly known by the Palestinian name Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS), Lebanon and Finnish-Arab Friendship Society (FAFS), Finland

This is a summary report for 2018 on cooperation between the Palestinian organization, BAS, and Finnish organization, FAFS, to assist Palestinian refugee children in Lebanon. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) provides basic education, health, relief and social services to refugees living in the area. In addition, there is a significant number of international and national organizations working with and helping the refugees, BAS being one of them.

Over the 42 years of its existence, BAS has developed into a highly professional and reliable organization. Unfortunately, the difficult situation of the Palestinian refugees in Lebanon has not improved and even exacerbated by the Syrian conflict, which is bringing increasing numbers of refugees to Lebanon.

### **Background**

BAS has several long time partners and donors, and it is able to run a variety of programs improving social and cultural welfare of the Palestinian refugees in the most vulnerable situation. BAS has developed appropriate and effective working methods for the challenging situation of the camps, as well as reliable reporting systems. FAFS is one of the long-time sponsors and partners of BAS.

**Family Happiness** is the basic social programme of BAS. It is a sponsorship programme targeting children and families in the most difficult situation in UNRWA refugee camps in Lebanon. The inclusion criteria of BAS are: 1) Loss of both parents, 2) Disability of the father that prevents him from working, 3) Loss of the father in a large family in which most of the children are under 13 years of age, 4) Hardship cases (socially orphans).

Chronic disease care places a large financial burden on households (AUB & UNRWA 2016).

In 2018, the BAS donor network helped in total over 1,000 children, 54 of whom had sponsors via FAFS in Finland. This overview discusses these 54 children, aged 0-20 years, 24 girls and 23 boys in 10 UNRWA camps. In Finland, each sponsor (or group of sponsors) has signed an agreement to pay €30 a month or €360 per year to the programme via FAFS. There were 82 individual sponsors in 2018, and the total amount of sponsorship assistance was €19,063 / LL 34,313,400 (€1=LL 1,800).

BAS has identified the children/families most in need of the services provided through the Family Happiness programme. Social workers of BAS visit and regularly monitor the children/families, discuss their situation, assist when possible and keep record of progress. Annual reports are written and sent to FAFS and FAFS forwards the reports to the sponsors. Correspondence and visits complement the follow-up. The reports contain basic data of each child: remarks on his/her health, performance in education and activities, as well as an overview of the family relationships, domestic situation and social worker's follow-up remarks. The sponsorship continues until the child has reached adulthood or/and is no longer in need of assistance. In 2018, five sponsorships were terminated. In majority of cases, the children had found work to provide for themselves. Two of the children are reported in the following statistics, as their sponsorship continued until the end of 2018.

#### Sponsored children by year of birth and age group

<b>Birth year</b>	<b>Age in 2018</b>	<b>Number of children</b>
2014-2018	4 years or under	3
2009 -2013	5-9 years old	16
2004-2008	10-14 years old	19
1998-2003	15 or older	16
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>54</b>

Sponsored children by camp and gender (n=54)

<b>Camp</b>	<b>Number of children</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>
Ein-el Helweh	4	3	1
Baalbeck	1	1	0
Beddawi	3	2	1
Bourj-el Barajneh	7	2	5
Bourj-el Shemali	4	1	3
El-Buss	3	0	3
Mar Elias	2	1	1
Nahr-el Bared	9	5	4
Rashidieh	4	2	2
Shatila	17	9	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>28</b>

BAS pays the designated families a monthly scholarship to cover special needs of the child. The sponsorship money is also used to hold activities in the BAS Center (sports, Dabke dancing, picnics, etc.), in which the children are encouraged to participate, and for other costs such as postal fees for children's letters send via airmail to their sponsors. Further, the funds partially cover the salaries of social workers who are providing support and documenting progress of the families.

The share of the sponsorship money (2018 average exchange rate €1=LL 1,800)

Monthly scholarship to the family	LL 36,000	€20
BAS activities for children and parents	LL 9,000	€5
Social workers' salaries	LL 9,000	€5
<b>Total</b>	<b>LL 54,000</b>	<b>€30</b>

Some sponsors may choose to donate more than €30 a month or send extra money for their children as gifts. The sum is paid to the child in full in addition to the monthly scholarship. The money is given to the mother at the BAS Center or at the family's home.

Allocating the scholarship this way ensures the optimal support for the child and the family. Moreover, FAFS and BAS have sponsorship cooperation to support elderly people (19) in two camps and Kindergarten children (32) in four camps.

### **Health and educational situation of the sponsored children**

According to the annual progress reports, 52% of the children were in good health. Almost half of the children had chronic health issues such as thalassemia, asthma, autism, anemia, and mental health problems. Eleven children were reported suffering from consequences of malnutrition and negligence.

Altogether 81% of the children were attending some type of educational institution (e.g. Kindergarten, UNWRA school, secondary or vocational education, university). Four children had dropped/failed out of school, and two individuals were currently in the work force. One 18-year-old was not attending school due to a severe autism spectrum disorder (there are no affordable special schools available to autistic adolescents).

Social workers provided a description of academic performance for some of the children, and out of those currently in school, 27% were getting "good" or "excellent" evaluations. Two children were reported to have improved and being more active than before. For 16% of the children, school success was described as "acceptable", "average", "medium marks". Approximately 14% of children were having difficulties at school and weak academic performance. Poor academic performance was linked to learning disabilities, mental health issues, and behavioral problems. Altogether 10 children received some type of tutoring to support their learning – yet, those with support were not the ones with poor but average academic performance. Only one of the children with academic difficulties was reported to receive tutoring. A significant proportion of the children had no description of academic performance.

The social workers are in a crucial position to support the children who have learning difficulties and are not getting help from their family members (due to illiteracy etc.).

## **Challenges**

The living conditions, i.e. housing conditions are often difficult. About half of the residences are inadequately furnished or not of good quality, and especially the cold and humid winter season causes problems. Social workers use the word “unhealthy” repeatedly to describe the family housings. There are efforts to improve the situation but, unfortunately, there are seldom alternatives due to the bad economic situation and refugee status.

Almost half of the children had at least one family member facing health-related difficulties (e.g. mental health problems, chronic medical conditions). The situation was the most challenging for those with an ill parent, for which parental health issues increased economic hardship as well as psycho-social stressors in the household. For several families, there was a mention of gender-based violence, with either mother or daughters being the victims and father being the perpetrator. The underlying reasons remain unclear, but in some cases the father was suffering from mental health problems or facing psycho-social stressors such as unemployment. Fortunately, at least some of the families were already receiving support to improve the situation. Further, divorces and one-parent households were common. Virtually all of the families had economic problems.

However, the social workers also tell about caring, warm parents who do their very best to encourage their children in school and hobbies. Especially mothers have been noted as going above and beyond for their children, since they often have to balance between providing for the family doing physically demanding and low-paying jobs, household chores, and raising their children.

## **Acknowledgements**

The cooperation partners have felt that knowing there are sponsors far away in the North, who care and share their concerns and encourage them via greetings and sometimes small gifts, gives the families remarkable moral support in their challenging situation. The programme has been running for 36 years and there are many long-term sponsors

following the life of the children. There is an ongoing bridge of friendship between Finnish and Palestinian people and families.

FAFS wishes to express its heartfelt gratitude to the 27 social workers for preparing the annual reports to sponsors, in cooperation with Directors of the ten centres. May our cooperation continue to be successful.

Contacts:

BAS: [www.socialcare.org](http://www.socialcare.org)

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Account for sponsorship support in Finland: FI93 8000 1101 2300 02,  
reference code 1009.

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