



Report 2/2019

Finnish Arab Friendship Society & The National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training

Sponsorship cooperation 2019 – taking care of the Palestinian children in Lebanon

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Finnish Arab Friendship Society runs Family happiness –sponsorship cooperation with NISCVT Beit Atfal Assumoud since 1982. Sponsors get annually reports about the situation of their sponsored children and families. Social workers in respective centers compile the reports. FAFS team always prepares a review of the reports in order to describe the situation of the children and families in more general terms. FAFS got again 2019 Family happiness –reports. This review is based on 45 of them.

Family background, size of the families, employment and health status of the parents

We analysed the family background of the 45 sponsored children (boys 18, girls 27) using the application documents. 29 of children had both parents alive, 15 had only mothers (1 missing information case).

The sponsored children had 172 siblings. Half of the families had 3-4 children, 21 % had 1-2 children, 18 % had 5-6 children and 11 % had 7-8 children.

Main livelihood activities of 30 men, described in the reports, were 37 % work, daily work, 27 % painting, 10 % construction, the rest 26 % were sanitary, gas station, vegetable or sweets selling, iron scrap collecting and farming jobs.

Among women the most common work status was housewife (35 %), then cleaner, sewing, selling sweets, housekeeper jobs. For over one third of mothers there was no mentioning about their work in the reports.

In health status there was a big difference between men and women. Only 4 of the 30 men were without any named health problem, 26 had one or more health problems, mostly musculoskeletal, heart and mental health problems. Health status of nearly half of the women was described "good" in the reports, one fifth were without any information about health. Those 16 women, who had health problems, suffered most often from diabetes and high blood pressure or from musculoskeletal disorders.



Our dear children by center and age 2019 (n=45)

Center	5-9 years	10-14 years	15 or older	Total
0101 Bourj el Barajneh	1	1	2	4
0103 Shatila	7	4	3	14
0104 Mar Elias	0	1	1	2
0201 Beddawi	1	2	0	3
0202 Nahr el-Bared *	0	2	1	3
0301 Ein el-Helweh	1	0	3	4
0302 Rashidieh	0	3	1	4
0303 Bourj el-Shemali	4	1	2	7
0304 El-Buss	1	2	0	3
0401 Baalbeck	0	1	0	1
Total	15	17	13	45

* There are 9 children from one family, who moved from Shatila to Nahr el-Bared, whose reports are not included in this review.

Child's educational situation – education, a key social and cultural right

Most of the children are at school, only few of them are studying at home mainly due to the health problems. 66 % of them has got good or medium marks at school. The rest, 33 % does not manage at school very well. However, only few of them had bad marks due to the health problems. It gives an impression, that the domestic problems dominate a lot. Most of them are tutored at home by siblings, the mother or the relatives.

Child's health situation – right to health and health service

In 62 % of reports the health situation of the child was reported being good, but in 38 % of cases there were health problems, quite long-term, like rheumatism, asthma, allergy, stomach problems, anaemia, eye problems, thalassemia, mental health problems, speech delay and autism. Some have mourning time after the death of some family member. Many of them need special treatment.

Health of the children by the camps

Center	Good health	Health problems	Total
0101 Bourj el Barajneh	1	3	4
0103 Shatila	8	6	14
0104 Mar Elias	2	0	2
0201 Beddawi	3	0	3
0202 Nahr el-Bared *	1	2	3
0301 Ein el-Helweh	3	1	4
0302 Rashidieh	3	1	4

0303 Bourj el-Shemali	4	3	7
0304 El-Buss	2	1	3
0401 Baalbeck	1	0	1
Total	28	17	45

Family relationships – safe place for children

Majority of the families (60 %) have very good or good relationships among family members, grandparents and relatives. "Loving, cooperative, caring", describe the social workers. Unfortunately, in 40 % of families there are tensions or divorce due to the unfortunate relationships between parents or in parent-child relationship. There are health and housing issues, which can be stressful for the whole family. The parents can get nervous and the children have behavioural problems. These families need the guidance of the social workers, and luckily they have their own social worker.

Child's activities – implementing social and cultural rights

According to the reports, 82 % of children are participating regularly or time to time in BAS activities. The activities are dabkeh-group, reproductive health program, peer education program, scout program, English courses (LEAP SHINE program), psycho-social support activities, painting and art crafts. A bit older girls have participated in hygiene-related campaign and are tutoring younger children in school subjects or participated during summer in vocational course (hair dressing). Boys can help social worker in his respective center. Scouting and football are mentioned in boys' and girls' reports.

Concerning those, who do not participate, the reason why, was explained in the reports: some are too young to participate, some live too far from the center (but are assisted to join in bigger festival occasions) or are busy with studying. There are also children among the sponsored children by Finnish sponsors, who are not able to participate in the offered activities due to their general health condition (e.g. severe autism disorder or immobility). Severe psychological condition can also show in terms of isolation from friends and family, *"...always stays in the room playing electronic games on mobile and watching TV with high volume" (case 24).*

The participation of parents is not comprehensively reported, in 77 % of the reports there is no information about this issue. Fifth of mothers and a few fathers do participate according to the sample of 45 reports.

Domestic situation – for freedom of fear and want

Families are big, in some cases the married children with their spouses are living in the same house with the sponsored child's family. The average size of the apartments is 2-3 rooms, kitchen and bathroom and the average number of the residents is 7 – 8.

In the reports there were 47 specifications for the child's home. 49 % of those described a good housing situation: good, clean, neat, healthy, well-furnished, renovated or painted by UNRWA. Bad housing situation (48 %) was reported being unhealthy, humid, simple, poorly furnished, needing of reconstruction by UNRWA. 4 % of cases were living in common housing with relatives or got support for rent from relatives. *"7 children sleep in the same room and all clothes are in one corner of the room". (case 41)*

Social worker's remarks about updating for the family situation

Social workers encounter all aspects in the daily life of the sponsored children and their families. They support parents to follow up the school achievements of their children, they guide parents in caring problems, they guide in practical duties like cleanliness. Also, lack of official documents e.g. identity papers are sometimes on the agenda in some family. Social workers alleviate the situation in family conflicts. One role is to encourage the parents in small business. The most common problem which the social workers report is the devastating poverty of the families, usually due to the sickness, disability or death of the breadwinner. The role of the social workers are really comprehensive.



Playground in Nahr el-Bared. Photo Hannu Ahonen

About determinants of health and well-being

In Lebanon the determinants of well-being of sponsored children and their families are both, the social determinants (living conditions) and political determinants (conflicts, distribution of power and money, racism). Professor, Dr Rita Giacaman from Birzeit University proposes to add one domain to analysis: suffering domain. It means exposure to political and other forms of violence, human insecurity, ambiguity, uncertainty, humiliation, deprivation silencing, violations of human rights, etc.

Reviewing the reports of 45 sponsored children highlights the social and political determinants, which must be addressed in connection to the sponsorship program. The advocacy work must challenge these aspects.

23.11.2019 SK