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## **Report 2/2018**

### **Explore and learn – group study trip to Lebanon 15th – 22th September 2018. Reported by Veera Nieminen and Sirkku Kivistö, Helsinki Finland**

The main purpose of the trip was to explore the Palestinian community in Lebanon and to meet the sponsored children and elderly, projects coordinated by Finnish Psychologists for Social Responsibility FiPSR and Finnish-Arab Friendship Society FAFS. Also some project management issues were on the agenda: the collection of evaluation data concerning the two years' projects by FiPSR and FAFS, and budget match with the financial needs of the latter part of the year 2018.

The Finnish delegation consisted of 12 people, who were sponsors and/or interested in Palestinian issues in Lebanon. The delegation stayed in the Hotel Mayflower Beirut and the program was facilitated in cooperation with Beit Atfal Assumoud.

### **The study tour group members – thanks to the organizers**

Hannu Ahonen, Sirpa Ahonen, Aulikki Ansamaa, Noor Assad, Alva Grünthal, Anna Hirvonen (journalist), Liisa Kaikula, Sirkku Kivistö, Paula Lähteenaho, Veera Nieminen, Reijo Rinne and Juha Tapio.

Sirkku Kivistö, Aulikki Ansamaa and Veera Nieminen were trip leaders and Noor Assad interpreter.

The group offer sincerest thanks to Director, Mr. Kassem Aina, mental health program coordinator, Ms. Liliane Younes, social worker Hanane Dabdoub, social workers of Shatila, Director of El Buss FGC Khawla Khalaff, Director of Baalbeck center, Ms. Aziza Shahadeh, social workers in Bourj el-Barajneh for all efforts which made our study trip most fruitful and unforgettable.

### **The main outputs of the trip**

#### **Learning about the Palestinians' situation, history and life in the camps**

The delegation attended in the Sabra and Shatila commemoration week's program "36 years painful memories". There were also attendants from other countries such as Italy, Britain, Switzerland, Norway, Malaysia and Japan. The program consisted of visits in the Palestinian camps (Shatila, Mar Elias, Burj al-Barajneh in Beirut, Nahr el-Bared in the north and Bourj el-

Shemali, Rashidied and El-Buss in the south) where there were different activities, such as speeches, exploring BAS centers and clinics, and walking trips. There were also trips to a Syrian Refugee Camp and Khiam Detention Center near Israeli border. In dinner occasions there were opportunities to discuss with other delegations. The Finnish delegation had daily meetings for sharing and reflecting their experiences.

### **Learning about work in Family Guidance Centers and Social Work in the Camps**

The Finnish delegation also had their own study meetings in FGC Beirut and in BAS headquarters Beirut. Ms. Liliane Younes gave an informative introduction about work in Family Guidance Centers. We discussed also how to collect some evaluation sample data directly from the children in some Family Guidance Center. Earlier the evaluations are done by the parents and/or by FGC staff. In BAS office Dr. Rania Mansour and sponsorship coordinator, Ms. Fatima Khaizaran talked about sponsorship program as a part of social work. The program Family Happiness has intensified cooperation in child protection with responsible organization (UPEL) and juvenile courts. Also, it was stated that sponsorship program holds a structure which allows a keen contact with social workers and families. Often this continuous cooperation prevents the worsening of problems.

### **Meetings with sponsored children and elderly**

One of the main goals of the trip was to make possible for sponsors to meet the sponsored children and elderly. In total there were 18 meetings with sponsored children, 2 meetings with sponsored kindergarten groups and 4 meetings with the elderly in different camps. According to the daily conversations and the feedback these meetings were considered as of the most touching and memorable moments on the trip.

### **Gathering information in order to increase consciousness on Palestinian issues in Lebanon**

The Finnish delegation gathered information on what they experienced on the trip. Many of the attendants also documented the trip by taking pictures or videos. Journalist Hanna Hirvonen interviewed the locals actively and is about to offer her articles for several publications. She had excellent help from Ms. Noor Assad who translated in the meetings between Arabic-Finnish. Also other attendants were planning to write and publish stories in magazines and in social media.

### **Experiencing the history of Beirut and civil war in Lebanon**

As a leisure activity the Finnish delegation visited Beit Beirut by kind permission of Judge Ziad governor of Beirut, together with staff members from Finnish Institute in Middle East. The visitors were guided by architect, Ms. Mona el Hallak. Ms. Hallak succeeded in lobbying for the preservation of the "Barakat Building" between 1994 and 2009. The building currently known as Beit Beirut will be turned into a museum and urban cultural center celebrating the history of Beirut and namely the civil war.

The delegation also enjoyed numerous traditional Palestinian and Lebanese meals during the week.

### **Project evaluation and funding**

Project coordinator Ms. Sirkku Kivistö and assistant coordinator Ms. Veera Nieminen had a meeting in the BAS financial department to discuss about the situation with the project funding. The financial reports concerning January-September were ready for the audit process, and sent thereafter to Finland.

Ms. Sirkku Kivistö, Ms. Veera Nieminen and Ms. Alva Grünthal had a meeting in FGC Beirut with Ms. Liliane Younes. Veera Nieminen introduced the project report 2017-18 of the sponsored children with multiple special needs, based on 30 progress reports of supported children. The situation in different FGC's and the evaluation of the two years' project period which is running out at the end of the year were discussed. Coordinators decided to interview Director Kassem Aina about what kind of direction is needed for mental health program in Family Guidance Centers. Unfortunately, there was no possibility for the interview during the visit.

Ms. Sirkku Kivistö, Ms. Veera Nieminen and Ms. Alva Grünthal visited with social worker Hanan Dabdoub (FGC Beirut) the special school Tanmia al Fikria, where several MSN children study at the moment.

### **Feedback survey (n=11) on the return way in Istanbul airport 22.9.2018**

The attendants gave feedback about the trip on our way home. According to feedback survey, the trip was mainly experienced as positive and enlightening experience. All of the attendants reported that the trip was successful as delivering information about the sponsored children's situation. 9 respondents reported that they received information about the Palestinians' situation in Lebanon well or very well. Also the study aspects of the trip (Beit Atfal Assumouds activities and development cooperation, sponsorship program as a part of social work and MSN project as a part of Family Guidance Centers' work) gathered mainly positive feedback.

### **Information work in Finland after the trip**

The participants who met sponsored children and elderly informed the other members in the sponsoring group and contacted sponsors whose child or elderly they had met.

Occasion in the City Library Rikhardinkatu, Helsinki, together with the Finnish delegation to the mental health conference (October). 18 attendees.

Solidarity Day Palestine: Kansainvälinen Palestiina-solidaarisuuspäivä, 29.11.2018 klo 18-19:40. Kemi kulturla center, Kemin kulttuurikeskus

Organizer: Peace committee of Lapland, Lapin Rauhanpuolustajat ry.

Juha Tapio: Palestiinaian refugees in lebanon, Palestiinalaiset pakolaiset Libanonissa

Sirkku Kivistö: Experiend of the study tour in Lebanon. For a group of 3 sponsors, news from Lebanon. Seurahuone, Helsinki.

### **So far published articles from the Explore and Learn trip:**

Noor Assad : Diasporan arkkitehtuuri..AKYS-tiedote 2/2018, 2

Hanna Hirvonen: Tekemällä opimme miten rauha syntyy. Kansan Uutiset 20.7.2018

Hanna Hirvonen: Valmiina lähtemään pakolaisleireihin. AKYS-tiedote 2/2018, 3

Hanna Hirvonen: Kummi Suomesta, lahja Palestiinasta. Maailman kuvalehti 6/2018, 32-5

Liisa Kirves: 156 paria villasukkia löysi tiensä pakolaisleirille Libanoniin. Koivukylän Lähisanomat nor 5, 16-17. 10.10.2018

Reijo Rinne: Ei unohdeta Sabraa ja Shatilaa. Eespäin! 2/2018, 7

Reijo Rinne: Ei unohdeta Sabraa ja Shatilaa. Tiedonantaja 22/2018,18-21.

Hanna Hirvonen;: Koti rajan takana. Kansan Uutiset 7.12.2018 16-17

**Program of the Finnish group, joined in Sabra and Shatila commemoration week's program (left column) and separate own study and sponsorship meetings program (right column)**

<b>Sabra and Shatila commemoration weeks' program Together with other delegations</b>	<b>Explore and learn – group study trip and meeting the sponsored children and elderly</b>
<b>Saturday Sept 15<sup>th</sup></b>	
Finnish delegation arrives in the airport at 22:55, settles down in Mayflower after that (9 persons), in private accommodation (2 persons)	
<b>Sunday Sept 16<sup>th</sup></b>	
Bourj el-Barajneh, Shatila, Mar Elias camps, Embroidery center, Mai Masri's film, dinner by invitation of Arab NGO Network for development (ANND)	Sirkku Kivistö met in Bourj el Barajneh 2 children and 2 elderly on behalf of sponsors Interviews about Sanra and Shatila week Sirkku Kivistö: Palestine TV, Biladi TV and Press TV Itejah Hannu Ahonen Al Mayadeen TV
<b>Monday Sept 17<sup>th</sup></b>	
Trip to Saida, Al Khiam center, Camp for refugees from Syria, Amel Association in Al Hasbani River. On the way back visit to the center of Unite Lebanon Youth (YLUP) in Debeye.	Liisa Kaikula met on sponsored child, Liisa € Aulikki Ansamaa 2 sponsored MSN children, Reijo Rinne and Paula Lähteenaho, Samuli Lähteenaho met 7 of Sirkku Kivistö 2 sponsored children on behalf of Vantaa Peace Group: Hannu Ahonen in FGC EI-Buss 1 sponsored MSN child Joined the YLUP dinner in Debeye.
<b>Tuesday Sept 18<sup>th</sup></b>	
In the South visit to Beaufort Crusader fortress in Nabatieh, Maroun Arras garden on the border, Tyre, musical concert in Bourj el Shemali, the bands of Shemali and Rashidieh	Sirkku Kivistö, Veera Nieminen, Alva Grünthal: with help of social worker Hanan Dabdoub visit to Tanmia al Fikria, meeting 2 sponsored children:  Sirkku Kivistö, Veera Nieminen, Alva Grünthal meeting with Liliane Younes about the evaluation of the two years' project period which is running out at the end of the year, possibility to collect a feedback sample from beneficiary children  Sirkku Kivistö, Veera Nieminen: Meeting in the financial department about the half-a-year report, report 9/2018 and remaining 2018 project budgets FIPSR and FAFS
<b>Wednesday Sept 19<sup>th</sup></b>	
Dinner by invitation from HE Ambassador	Aulikki Ansamaa, Hanna Hirvonen and Noor Assad to Baalbeck, meeting 1 sponsored elderly,

<p>of Palestine in Lebanon</p>	<p>1 child and family on behalf of the sponsoring group</p> <p>Study day of the group in Beirut Study meeting with FGC Beirut, psychologist Liliane Younes: Mental health program and schooling of children with multiple special needs, actual situation, future perspectives and financial needs</p> <p>Meeting with social work coordinator, Dr Rania Mansour and sponsorship coordinator Fatima Khaizaran: Sponsorship program as a part of social work. Current situation and future perspectives.</p> <p>Sirpa Ahonen: meeting a sponsored child</p> <p>Guided tour in Beit Beirut, Independence Street, Sodeco, by Dr Mona El Hallak – “Collective Memory of Beirut” –photo project with staff members of FIME</p>
<p><b>Thursday Sept 20th</b></p>	
<p>Nahr el Bared camp, Children’s play ground, presentation, lunch, walking tour in the camp</p> <p>Mr Tala Salman, presentation and invitation from Assafir Newspaper to dinner</p>	<p>Juha Tapio met 3 sponsored KG children and their teachers. Sirrku Kivistö met 1 sponsored child on behalf of the sponsoring group and met social worker of FGC, discussed about the project evaluation scale, developed in the FGC Nahr el-Bared</p>
<p><b>Friday Sept 21st</b></p>	
<p>Commemoration program in the center of Al Ghobeiry municipality and memory place of Sabra and Shatila martyrs Lunch and discussions with survival families in Shatila center</p> <p>Meeting with the Civil committee against terrorism invited by Mr Refaal Zoeter</p>	<p>Veera Nieminen met 3 sponsored children Alwa Grünthal contacted a psychology student for the interview. Sirrku Kivistö discussed with the social workers in Shatila We met social worker intern from Tampere University, Evelina Sironen</p>
<p><b>Saturday Sept 22nd</b></p>	
<p>Finnish group’s take off in the airport at 06:30. Leaving hotel ca 4.15</p>	<p>About UNRWA’s situation we got the book The Ongoing UNRWA crisis: Context, Dimensions, Prospects and Responses, The Policy Dialogue Series – Lebanese-Palestinian Relations / 06, Common Space Initiative. August 2018</p>