



Finnish Psychologists for Social Responsibility (FiPSR), Finland  
The National Institution of Social Care and Vocational Training (NISCVT), known by the Palestinian name Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS), Lebanon

**Overview of annual progress reports of the 28 sponsored children with multiple special needs (MSN) in the school year 2021-2022, compiled by Imen Belhaj, Sirkku Kivistö and Monica Musri.**

**Background – gradually improved possibilities for children with MSN to get education- thanks to the FGC staff efforts**

The mental health programme of Beit Atfal Assumoud (BAS) started under the name Family Guidance Center (FGC) in Beirut in 1977. In 2009 FGCs invited sponsors to assist those families who lacked money to pay the special education tuition and rehabilitation service fees. At that time only 7 children were placed in three institutions. The FGC staff negotiated with special schools and institutions to open their doors to Palestinian and other disadvantaged children. It resulted in a breakthrough. In the school year 2021-2022 there were 33 schools and institutions offering educational and rehabilitation service (see Appendix). UNRWA has agreements with some specialized schools in Lebanon, most for children with mental retardation, Down's syndrome and development delay. In the reporting year UNRWA agreed to cover the costs of 4 BAS sponsored children. FGCs give credit to Ms Taghrid Awad, head of the UNRWA disability program, who tries her best to get some of the fees covered despite the limited financial resources of UNRWA.

**Total number of children with multiple special needs (MSN) in 2021-2022**

114 children with MSN and their caregivers benefitted from the service 2021-2022 in local FGCs: Beirut 39 children, Saida 20, El-Buss 15, Beddawi 21, Nahr el Bared 19. The number of special schools available by area were: Beirut 18, Saida 5, El-Buss 3, Beddawi 4, Nahr el-Bared 3 (see Appendix). By gender the children (n=114) were 68 % boys and 32 % girls. Most of them (82 %) were continuing their education and treatments as existing beneficiaries while 18 % were new beneficiaries. 91% were Palestinians living in Lebanon (PRL) and 9% were displaced Syrian children.



Activity day in Family Guidance Center Saida. Photo BAS archive.

### **Sample of the total number of MSN children – 28 individually sponsored children – description of the group**

The FGCs invite sponsors for families who are in most need of support for tuition fees. During the school year 2021-2022 Finnish, Italian and Swiss supporters sponsored individually 28 children. The sponsorship support covers tuition fees, medical tests, medicine. Previously the children's parents paid the transportation costs, but now this is no longer feasible. If the tuition fee is negotiated lower than expected, some other children could benefit from sponsorship.

### **Basic information about the sponsored children with multiple special needs (MSN)**

Most of the sponsored children are primary school age (6-12 y). In FGC Beirut and FGC Saida one child is pre-school age (<6 y) and 4 are secondary school age (15-18).

They were in the care of four centers: FGC Beirut 15, FGC Saida 7, FGC El-Buss 5, FGC Nahr el-Bared 1, and fortunately one new sponsorship has been accepted by FGC Beddawi for the year 2022-2023.

By gender there were boys 21 and girls 7. Ten of these children were new beneficiaries in the school year 2021-2022, the others having been sponsored over a longer period.

By nationality 26 were Palestinians living in Lebanon (PRL), 1 was Palestinian displaced from Syria (PRS), and there was 1 Syrian (S).

### **About Children with Multiple Special Needs (MSN) schooling and rehabilitation program**

The MSN program mainly provides special education for children who are not able to go to public school. Nearly all, except one disabled girl, have a place suitable for his/her situation. Some special schools have therapy services in addition to special education to support the child comprehensively (speech therapy, psychomotor therapy, psychotherapy, physiotherapy). 7 children benefited from 1 extra therapy, 10 children from 2 extra therapies and 6 children from more than two extra therapies (n=23). For 4 children there were no extra therapies in the special school (missing information 1). The target of the special education and rehabilitation were mainly academic and social skills, in addition the development in sensory/motor and psychological status, also basic job skills, and improvement of the child's environment.

The follow-up of progress in Family Guidance Centers (n=27)

Progress is monitored by FGC interventions consisting of psychiatric consultations, sessions with therapists and home visits by social workers

\* 13 children received 1 psychiatric consultation; 9 children 2 or more consultations; 5 children received no consultation

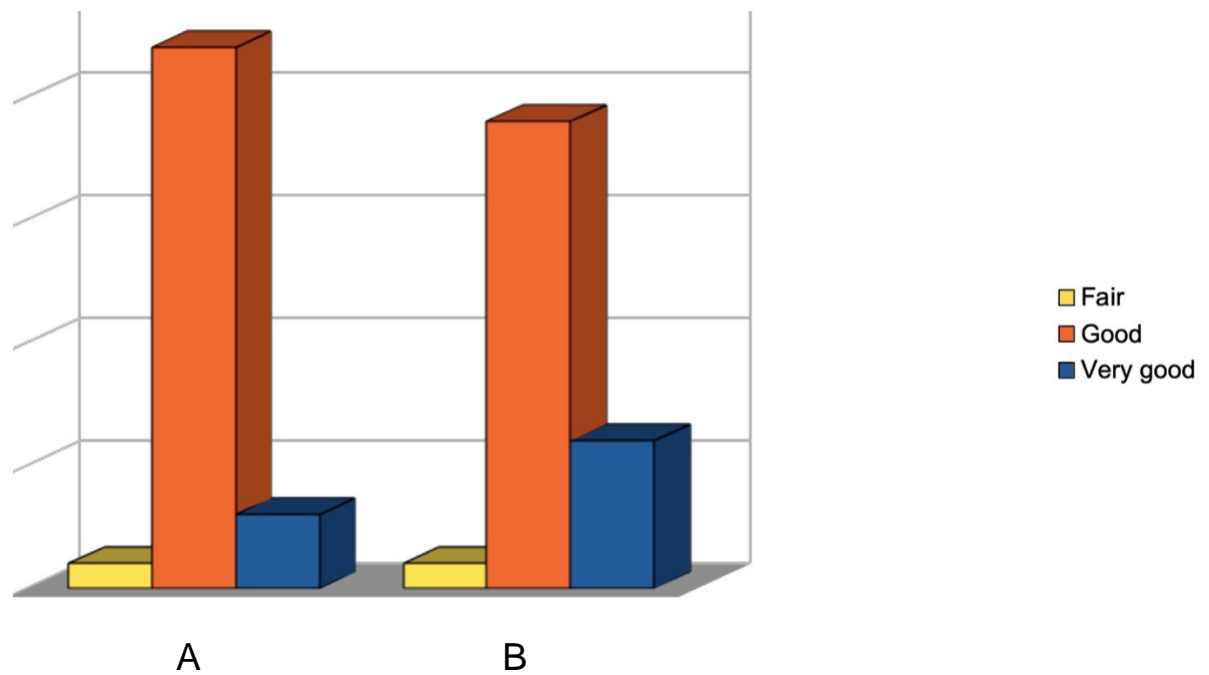
\*140 home visits were performed by social workers, in some cases weekly. Meetings were held at the FGC if covid prevented the home visit.



FGC Saïda, Eid celebration day. BAS photo archive

**Table. Improvements in children’s conditions and social situation. School year 2021-22**

A. Improvement in school year assessed by FGC team (n=26), B. Improvement in social situation assessed by social worker (community worker) (n=27)



The FGCs are in an ideal position to refer the client families to benefit from other BAS programs and services (e.g. dental care, cultural activities, learning support, vocational training etc). About 15 families of 28 could use some of those activities.

**Discussion**

The social workers and FGC teams have succeeded in building good contacts with the main family and school support systems around the MSN children. Also cooperation with special schools and institutions is good. The home visits and meetings in the FGC by the social workers are crucial in

continuing to monitor progress. Other service of BAS are also available for families of children with multiple special needs. Thus, the holistic community-based approach is moving forward as set out in the Strategic Plan for Mental Health for Beit Atfal Assumoud, NISCVT (2020-2024).

**Tiivistelmä 28 erityislapsen tilanteen kuvauksesta kuntoutuskummeille tulleista raporteista. Raportin ovat laatineet psykologit Imen Belhaj, Sirkku Kivistö ja Monica Musri**

Kuntoutuskummit tukevat Beit Atfal Assumoud -järjestön perheneuvoloiden hoidossa olevia erityislapsia, joille turvataan erityisopetus- ja kuntoutuspalveluja. Vuonna 2022 UNRWA pystyi ottamaan vastuun neljän kuntoutuskummilapsen koulutusmaksuista, mutta ilman kuntoutuskummeja muut lapset olisivat jääneet ilman oikeuttaan opiskella ja saada tukea kuntoutumiseensa. PSV on yhteydessä sveitsiläisiin ja italialaisiin, joilla myös on kuntoutuskummitoimintaa (Suomi 17 lasta, Italia 3 lasta, Sveitsi 8 lasta, yht. 28). Tässä raportissa on yhdistetty näiden maiden saamat kuntoutuskummilasten edistymisraportit.

Beit Atfal Assumoudin (BAS) perheneuvoloiden henkilökunta on tehnyt suuren työn, suorastaan läpimurron, neuvotellessaan erityislapsen koulutusmahdollisuuksista. Raportin katsauksessa on lista kouluista, joissa kuntoutuskummilapset ovat opiskelleet. Erityisen ilahduttavaa on, että mahdollisuuksia on auennut eri puolilla Libanonia, ei yksin Beirutin ja Saidan alueilla.

Perheneuvola seuraa ja tukee koko ajan erityislapsen ja heidän perheidensä tilannetta. Tavoitteina oli lasten edistyminen kouluaineissa (21) ja sosiaalisessa kanssakäymisessä (20) sekä aistien toiminnan (14) ja tunne-elämän kehittyminen (10). Myös työelämän perusvalmiuksien (3) ja lapsen elinympäristön kohentamiseen (5) liittyi tavoitteita. Perheneuvoloiden arvioiden mukaan lasten tilanne kohentui seurantavuonna. Kouluaineissa erittäin hyvin tai hyvin oli edistynyt 20 lasta, kohtaisesti 6, yhden kohdalla ei havaittu edistystä. Lasten perhe- ja muussa sosiaalisessa ympäristössä kohentuminen oli erittäin hyvää (6), hyvää (19) tai kohtalaista (2).

Viidennes lapsista oli 2022 uusia tuensaajia. Vuonna 2022 kuntoutuskummilasten määrään tuli lisäys, saatiin uusi tukiryhmä ja tuen piirissä on nyt 18 lasta. Enemmistö on poikia. BAS palvelee resurssiensa rajoissa sekä Libanonissa asuvia palestiinalaisia, Syyriasta paenneita palestiinalaisia ja syyrialaisia sekä köyhiä libanonilaisia lapsia. Valitettavasti Libanonin kriisitalouden ja syrjivän työläinsäädännön takia perheille ei ole avautumassa taloudellista tilannetta kohentavia työmahdollisuuksia, joten kummien tuki erityislapsen koulutukselle on edelleen tarpeen.

BASin mielenterveysohjelman ja erityislapsen koulutushankkeen koordinaattori on maisteri Khawla Khalaf, El-Bussin (Tyyroksen) perheneuvolan johtaja.

**Appendix List of special schools offering services for MSN children, referred by the FGC & parents. School year 2021-2022**

**FGC Beirut 18 special schools**

Rweiss International School  
Al Moasat Association  
Ali Al Hallaq School for Education  
MIS School  
Manarat Al Uloom School  
Dar Al-Hlem Association for Learning Difficulties  
Caritas Lebanon - Palace of Modern Sciences for Education  
Al Hanan for children with Special Needs  
ECOLE DE CULTURE GENERAL  
The Ghassan Kanafani Cultural Foundation  
Al-Mabarat Schools - Mabrrat Al-Mam Al-Khouni lukio  
Al-Mabarat- Al-Imam Al-Hassan High School  
Dr. Mohamad Khaled Social Foundation  
Social care institutions in Lebanon - the Islamic orphanage  
Synod of Churches for Social Service in Lebanon  
Dar Al-Hlem Association for Learning Difficulties  
Lebanon International College  
Rehana International Development Program

**FGC Saida, 5 special schools**

Lana Al Mostakbal  
Lebanon International College  
Happy Home  
Saida International School  
Social care institutions in Lebanon - the Islamic orphanage

**FGC El-Buss, 3 special schools**

Al Hanan for children with Special Needs  
Lwah School of Excellence  
Mousawat

**FGC Beddawi, 4 special schools**

Community Based Rehabilitation Association CBRA  
Saroit Association for Social & Psychological Care  
Al Muna Center for Deafness and Intellectual Development  
Social care institutions in Lebanon / the Islamic orphanage

**FGC Nahr el-Bared, 3 special schools**

Community Based Rehabilitation Association CBRA  
Saroit Association for Social & Psychological Care  
Social care institutions in Lebanon - the Islamic orphanage

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