

February 2019



KEREN HAYESOD קרן היסוד  
FOR THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

Status Report

## Youth Futures: Building a Brighter Future, One Child at a Time



70 years of achievements  
powered by Keren Hayesod

### A 2018 Activity Report



## Introduction

**Thank you for your generous support to the Youth Futures mentoring programme, which is giving thousands of children at-risk and their families hope for a brighter future. In a little more than a decade, Youth Futures has increased the range of services and resources available to children and youth at-risk in Israel's socio-geographic periphery by pooling together all community resources for the benefit of each child, one at a time.**

## A Comprehensive Mentoring Programme

Founded in 2006, **Youth Futures** is The Jewish Agency's high-impact, community-based initiative that addresses the long-term needs of "at-risk" children ages 8-14 in a holistic manner. The programme's vision is to provide these children and their families with adequate tools to break the cycle of marginalization and risk so that they can realize their potential. The programme employs a unique mentoring model through which Mentors are assigned to a total of 16 children and work with each child both individually and as a group, alongside schools, families, and social service networks to bring about lasting change.

Currently in its 12th year of successful activity nationwide, Youth Futures has made significant breakthroughs in positioning itself as a leader in providing a positive intervention model that improves the status of youth at-risk. Most notably, the Israeli Government has committed to take an active and substantial role in supporting and promoting the Youth Futures vision and model.

Youth Futures is a success because of its holistic and in-depth approach that focuses on the positive forces in each child and need to be awakened, enabling problems to be addressed and barriers to success to be removed. Its programming is based on the belief that long-term change can only occur when the entire family is being served.

At the heart of Youth Futures are its professional Mentors, young change-agents who live within the communities they serve. Each Mentor works full-time 40 hours a week as a personal guide for children and their families – maintaining a presence in their lives, and encouraging parental involvement, for three to five years. Each child is accompanied during school hours – in formal education, and after school – at home and in the community. Throughout the programme, Youth Futures monitors each child's progress and adapts the programme to fit each child's needs, train mentors and implements an internal evaluation.

### **The crucial guidance provided for each child has an impact on them in four key areas:**

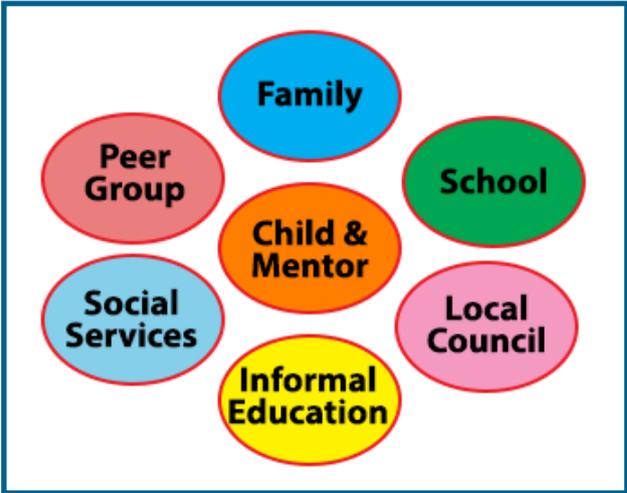
- **Personal:** developing tools such as patience and anger-management
- **Familial:** improving relationships between members of the child's nuclear family
- **Social:** providing the tools and opportunities to make friends
- **Scholastic:** building home and school environments conducive to motivation and success

This year, Youth Futures continued to increase its work with families with special emphasis on engaging parents in their child's education and providing them with the skills, tools, and confidence necessary to take ownership of their own lives and the lives of their children. Through its Family and Community Coordinators, Youth Futures works directly with parents on parenting skills, accessing benefits and social services, and managing finances.

**We are pleased to share that Youth Futures continued to operate in 36 locations in 158 schools during the 2017-18 programme year, reaching a total of 4,183 children and youth.**

## A Closer Look at the Impact of Youth Futures 2017-18

Youth Futures operates in 137 elementary and 21 junior high schools in all population sectors including Jewish and Arab, religious and secular. Eighty-two percent of the students are Jewish while 12% are Arab, 2% are Bedouin or Druze. A large percentage of the children in Youth Futures come from single parent (30%) and/or immigrant families (14%) who are living on the fringes of poverty and/or under the care of welfare services (28%) and forty percent are from families with four or more children. Fifty-seven percent of the participants are male and 43% are female.



The Youth Futures team in each location typically consists of a Programme Director, a team of 8-10 Mentors and one Family and Community Coordinator. Parents of the children served by Youth Futures struggle with poverty, un- and under-employment, and limited knowledge of and access to resources provided by the municipality. In addition to serving a large percentage of children from single-parent, new-immigrant and large families, Youth Futures also works with children who are victims of neglect or abuse. The Family and Community Coordinator conducts monthly home visits, parenting groups and parent-child activities on a regular basis.

Youth Futures works in close collaboration with a number of local bodies, including the Jewish Agency and Keren Hayesod-UIA, the Ministry of Education, the local regional council/ municipality as well as a variety of non-profits in the community who specialize in working with children and families at-risk.

### Impact on Children:

An internal evaluation conducted by the Digma Institute on behalf of Youth Futures concluded that at the end of the three years of participation in Youth Futures, participants' experiences improved in all four spheres of focus (personal, social, family, and scholastic) in which Youth Futures is active.

### Findings indicate the following impact of Youth Futures nationwide:

Area of Improvement	Average % of Participants
Self-confidence, coping skills, motivation, joy of life, independence, self-awareness, and behaviour	85%
Social skills including one's sense of social belonging and accepted social behaviour	78%
Motivation for success in school and academic performance	73%
Family relationships such as a positive home environment, familial support, setting boundaries at home and parental functioning	72%

## Impact on Families:

The expansion of Youth Futures to include an increased focus on the entire family has been met with tremendous enthusiasm among participants' parents. 97% reflected very high satisfaction with the programme. According to recent evaluation findings at the close of the final parents' group session, completed feedback forms yielded the following results:

- 85% claimed that they improved their tools and skills as parents.
- 83% stated that the sessions contributed to a better understanding of their children and their needs.
- 83% reported an improvement in their relationship with their children.
- 70% reported an improvement in their relationships with their children's school.

## Long-Term Impact on Alumni:

Youth Futures continues to monitor its programme graduates to assess the long-term benefits of its programming on its more than 10,000 alumni. The evaluation shows that the effects of the programme continue to resonate with alumni, including those 18 years of age, and to positively influence their self-esteem, behaviour, and self-confidence, which simultaneously mitigate potential risk factors.

Youth Futures has hired full-time Alumni Relations Managers who are devoted to identifying alumni who need continued assistance. According to Youth Futures alumni, working with Mentors was a profoundly meaningful experience. Nearly 80% of surveyed alumni stated that their Mentor greatly contributed to their personal success. Alumni also attribute their experience in Youth Futures with their ability to succeed in school; 94% of alumni are satisfied with their life situation and credit the Youth Futures experience with that contentment. A majority of alumni (79%) demonstrated increased motivation to serve in advanced Israel Defence Forces (IDF) roles or perform civil service. Seventy-three percent of the alumni also attribute their ability to attend higher education to their involvement in Youth Futures.

Recently, Youth Futures started to integrate programme alumni who are high school students back into the programme. In Israeli high schools, students are required to complete 60 hours of volunteer service. Youth Futures reaches out to its alumni and encourages them to complete their volunteer service by working with children currently in the programmes, helping children with homework and facilitating afternoon enrichment activities.



## Sarah's Story of Success

Sara is in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and just completed her first year in Youth Futures in Yokneam-Megiddo. She is Ethiopian and has a twin brother and a younger sister. Her parents work around the clock in order to support their family. When she was referred to Youth Futures, Sara was described as a sad and depressed child who was not able to find any success at school, both socially and academically despite her desire to do so. Due to her frustration, Sara often had angry outbursts and had difficulty getting along with her teachers and peers.

When Sara's mentor visited her parents at home, they were very eager to try and help Sara. At first, Sara's mentor focused on helping her discover her strengths and realize that her parents believe in her. They worked on building Sara's ability to face challenges that they identified together, widening her social circle, increasing her self-confidence, accepting others and strengthening her connection with her family.

Sara's mentor worked with both Sara, her teachers at school and her parents who participated in two parent workshops facilitated by the Youth Futures Family and Community coordinator. As time passed, her mentor began to see Sara's an improvement in school and slowly noticed a smile on her face. By the middle of the school year, Sara was already a different child, one who takes initiative, is calm, is highly motivated to succeed in school and gets together with friends during and after school.

After just six months in the programme, Sara improved her grades from an average of 60 to 80. At the end of the year, Sara received a certificate of excellence from her school. All she needed was for someone to invest and believe in her.



## Map of Youth Futures Locations

