

# Youth Futures

Achieving, Excelling, Expanding



**2015 Annual Report**

Keren Hayesod – United Israel Appeal

December 2015



**קרן היסוד הישראלי**  
**UNITED ISRAEL APPEAL**

## Youth Futures 2015 Annual Report

Presented by Keren Hayesod – United Israel Appeal

Keren Hayesod United Israel Appeal is profoundly grateful for the steadfast support of our friends and supporters of our initiatives including Youth Futures. With your guidance and support, we have improved and developed our interventions on behalf of Israeli youth at-risk, strengthening our presence in underprivileged communities and working with families and parents to effect sustainable change in children's lives.

Youth Futures is our flagship initiative that empowers youth and families from socioeconomically marginalized areas in Israel. **Founded in 2005, Youth Futures currently serves 14,000 children, youth, and their families in 36 locations.** Through an innovative model of in-depth engagement of professional Mentors with children, families, and communities, Youth Futures empowers Israeli youth from disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome the obstacles they face, achieve their goals, and realize their potential. Beginning in the 2014-15 school year, Youth Futures has deepened its work in the family circle; mentors now split their work time and attention so that 60% of their time is devoted to the child and 40% to the family while a new role – the family and community coordinator is overseeing the family empowerment aspect for all families in the programme.

Currently in our ninth year of successful activity, we have made significant breakthroughs. Most notably, we have engaged the Israeli government to take an active and substantial role in supporting and promoting the Youth Futures vision and model. **We have begun a new era of partnership with the Ministry of Education,** which has formally agreed to support Youth Futures in the current school year with 11 million shekels (approximately \$2.4 million). This is a significant investment in the intervention model and tools that are unique to Youth Futures, and an endorsement of their ability to create positive change for our target population and for Israeli society as a whole. In addition, for the first time since the creation of the programme, **every municipality in which Youth Futures operates will contribute to the cost of its local programme this year.** The municipalities' contributions amount to about \$1.6 million, in addition to the support of the Ministry of Education.

It is evident that we are harnessing the growing support of the Israeli government and of Israeli society for our programme. With this impressive achievement, we want to focus on growth and sustainability. We want to enter new communities and influence new spheres of impact. We also want to maintain the momentum we have achieved and develop a model that is sustainable over time. Youth Futures is in the process of creating a subsidiary company, which will become operational in the coming months. As a subsidiary, Youth Futures will be in a position to grow and enhance government support of the programme and to invite our partners to take a significant role in shaping and designing the programme and its future. The attached document offers more detail about the progress Youth Futures has made over the years. We are proud to have reached this seminal moment and look forward to your partnership as we bring Youth Futures to the next level and stage of development.



## Youth Futures in the Community: A Closer Look at its Impact Tzohar Region (Safed)

In the northern city of Safed, Youth Futures has been active for the past decade. In 2014-15, the programme operated at 94% capacity, serving 170 children and youth from 165 families. Both directly and indirectly, Youth Futures Tzfat reached out to an estimated 335 individuals, including parents and siblings, other family members, and members of the local community. A staff of 12 Mentors worked with students in six elementary schools (out of 17 total in the community), with the support of a family and community coordinator and a local director. A small number of middle-school students (2% of total programme participants) also received Youth Futures services.

Nearly half (48%) of children were new to Youth Futures in 2014-15, most of them in grades 3 to 5. All families served by Youth Futures Tzfat were Jewish in 2014-15, with the highest proportion (34%) coming from the ultra-Orthodox community. An additional 23% were Orthodox; 21% were traditional and 21% were secular/non-observant.

At the beginning of the school year, Mentors identified several target areas for improvement for this group of new participants, including: self-esteem, coping with stressful situations, taking responsibility for personal actions, and quality of family relationships.

During the 2014-15 programme year, 23% of youth in Youth Futures Tzfat participated in an afterschool programme, such as sports or arts and crafts; 25% received therapy for learning disabilities and/or emotional difficulties; 31% received one-on-one tutoring; and 20% attended an afternoon learning centre.

A number of special events and workshops serving Youth Futures families in Hatzor and took place during 2014-15, including:

- Six parents' groups led by the family and community coordinator including a couples' group and a group led by a photographer with therapy experience, which used photography as a tool for healing and self-empowerment;
- A family outing at a park outside Tzfat that drew 130 participants;
- Volunteer opportunities for children at a soup kitchen and a nursing home; and
- Holiday celebrations for Hanukkah, Purim, and Passover that joined children and Mentors with parents, siblings, and other community members.

### Sedot Negev

Sedot Negev is located in Israel's Negev region, and ranked at the bottom half of Israel's socioeconomic scale (according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics). Youth Futures has been operating in the community for the last seven years including 2014-15 when it operated at full capacity, serving 144 children. The programme was facilitated under the guidance of nine Youth Futures Mentors and a Family and Community Coordinator.

In 2014-15, the programme added a Family and Community Coordinator, who led courses and discussions on pressing issues facing our parent population, including personal



finance, understanding personal rights and accessing services, and enhancing parenting skills. We worked with local welfare services to ensure that parents and families received the services that will enable their success. Thus, Mentors now serve parents alongside children, offering additional parent mentoring and home visits.

#### **Activity Highlights in Sedot Negev 2014-15**

- **Parenting Workshops:** 24 parents total were part of two regular parenting groups, supported by the Family and Community Coordinator, in which they discussed a variety of parenting topics, including setting boundaries and making time for play.
- **Fun Parent/Child Days:** Two fun days in which parents and children played together in a friendly spirit of fun and competition.
- **Mother/Daughter Group:** The 6th-grade girls had a “girls’ night” in which they discussed becoming a teen, played games, and bonded. On another night, the mothers and daughters made challah together and performed the challah ceremony. The girls also were part of a bat mitzvah ceremony as part of their graduation from Youth Futures, attended by their families, Mentors, and city personnel.
- **Fathers and Sons Activities:** Our fathers and sons bar mitzvah trip included a visit to Jerusalem and the Western Wall. The fathers and sons also took part in a woodworking workshop.

#### **Maale Yosef**

Youth Futures has been operating in Maale Yosef for the past 10 years. In 2014-15, the programme's team of seven Mentors reached out to 93 elementary school students in four schools. In collaboration with local schools and families, Youth Futures has been providing these youth at risk with a challenging educational environment and the support to grow and develop, something which they had previously not been exposed to.

Programme staff created personal work plans for participants which included enrichment activities, therapies and diagnostic testing according to their needs. A total 64% of participants attended after school activities; 41% received therapy and /or diagnostic testing to identify learning and behavioral issues.

#### **Activity Highlights in Maale Yosef 2014-15**

- **Parenting Class-** 50 parents are part of a parenting class that will hold three workshops throughout the school year to encourage more parental involvement in the programme. The first workshop focused on parenting and communication was held at a local school. While the parents enjoyed a lecture and discussion, Mentors led an experiential activity for the children, including group games. The class was very important because parents got to know each other and were empowered by lectures on subjects that helped decrease the pressure on them and the difficulties they face with their children. It also helped them to understand the importance of involving themselves more in their children’s education.
- **Parent/Child Holiday Activity-**in Maale Yosef, Mentors initiated several activities that were focused on environmentalism and recycling. Crafts included recycled



materials, and a local clothing company donated scraps of material that the Mentors use for crafts. One example of such an activity was held to celebrate the Tu Bishvat holiday. A group of 50 children and their parents learned together about bamboo and its uses to create storage and artworks, as well as its economically sustainable properties.

## West Jerusalem

Jerusalem is a city comprised of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds. The western part of the city is largely Jewish, and of the city's Jewish population, 40.5% of children live in poverty. The Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics ranks the city at a mere 4 out of 10 on the socioeconomic scale, and the average income for the head of a household is 14% lower than the national average. Only a third of the city's high-school students graduate with full matriculation, leaving many young people ineligible to apply for university study.

In 2014-15, Youth Futures West Jerusalem served 178 elementary school students at six elementary schools. Most students (78%) are secular-Jewish, while 18% are religiously observant Jews. Nearly two-thirds (64%) have participated in Youth Futures for two to three years, with the remainder in their first year of the programme. Approximately one-quarter (22%) of the participants have been diagnosed with psychological disorders and/or learning disabilities.

The families of Youth Futures West Jerusalem children face serious life challenges:

- 10% of families include at least one family member with special needs.
- 13% of families are new immigrants.
- 28% of families receive welfare and social services.
- 25% are under the care of a social worker

### **Youth Futures Activity highlights in West Jerusalem during the 2014-15 programme year:**

- **Martial arts activity for bat-mitzvah-age girls:** During five meetings, 25 girls received holistic martial arts training, aimed at improving their self-esteem and sense of personal safety. These meetings celebrated the girls' bat mitzvahs and their entrance into young adulthood. They occurred at the El Ha'Lev centre for women's empowerment. During the last of five meetings, the girls' mothers joined to celebrate their daughters and see what their daughters have learned.
- **Parents and Children Night at the Gilo A School:** fifty (50) children and parents enjoyed a joint activity, providing an important period of shared play and recognition of their children's accomplishments. Third- and fourth-grade children decorated light fixtures with their parents. Sixth-grade students participated in a moving Youth Futures graduation ceremony and presented a poster they created with their Mentors depicting the values they want to uphold in their lives moving forward. One child gave an impromptu speech thanking his Mentor for her support over three years.
- **Growing Together – Mother and Daughter Group:** eighteen (18) mothers and daughters joined a workshop, led by the Family and Community Coordinator, to improve their communication and relationship with each other. Over six meetings, the group discussed issues like home environment, communication, self-esteem, and play. During the last meeting, their Mentors joined to witness their progress.



## Finding on Immediate Effectiveness in 2015

Children reported to Youth Futures that they exhibited improvement in the areas targeted by the programme, thanks to the sense of acceptance they get from the Mentors and the strong relationship that develops with them. For example:

- ✓ A rise in the percentage of participants whose sense of self-capacity is rated moderate or above (69% versus 44% at the time of enrolment in the programme);
- ✓ A significant increase in the percentage of participants who exhibit high or very high assertiveness vis-à-vis their peer group (48% versus 11% at the time of enrolment);
- ✓ A significant increase in the percentage of participants who express great or very great satisfaction with their social situation (69% versus 41% at the time of enrolment);
- ✓ A rise in the percentage of participants who perceive themselves as good or very good pupils (69% versus 60% at the time of enrolment).
- ✓ A rise in the percentage of participants who attribute to the programme a great or very great improvement in their relations with their immediate family (73% at the end of the first year, versus 48% a few months into the programme).

## Findings Regarding Ongoing Effectiveness

Youth Futures has a strong ongoing impact on half or more of its graduates on all parameters related to life skills and escaping social marginalization, and a moderate or better ongoing impact on these parameters for two-thirds or more of its graduates. Major findings include:

1. **Affinity between three main variables pointing to empowerment and reinforced personal resilience** – (1) optimism about the future (100% of graduate sample); (2) sense of self-capacity (92%); and (3) belief in the ability to change one's life despite difficult life circumstances (64%).
2. Indications that Youth Futures **helped graduates develop a normative outlook**:
  - 87% of graduates are certain that, thanks to the programme, they will be inducted into the army (a much higher percentage than in the population at large – 74.9% of men and 59.1% of women, per IDF Spokesperson data, 2011).
  - 84% of graduates express unequivocal opposition to violence.
  - An absolute majority of graduates attribute to the programme a moderate or higher contribution to shaping their outlook: 84% believe that, thanks to the programme, it is important to them to make positive use of their time. 75% of graduates report that the programme caused them to decide what they want to achieve in life, and an absolute majority report aspirations and dreams of a normative nature, e.g. soccer player, lawyer, doctor, computer professional, auto mechanic, interior designer, career army officer, police officer, animal psychologist and the like. Additionally, 82% feel more responsible, 81% report that Youth Futures had enabled them to control themselves better, 72% stay away from negative peer influences and get along better with others.
  - A significant percentage of graduates (41%) continue to take part in enrichment activities even when they are no longer subsidized by the programme.



- 3. The Programme is credited with helping improve graduates' status in the scholastic sphere.** The programme strengthens the ability to manage within a framework and abide by its rules (77%), improves graduates' scholastic status (80%) and scholastic performance (76%).
- 4. The changes described in the three previous spheres of intervention were intensified by the programme team's work with the participants' parents, in terms of ensuring conditions that enable the children to thrive:** 69% of the graduates' parents report that the programme had helped them to a moderate or greater degree in terms of enhancing their understanding of their parental role and improving their actual parenting skills. They also report significantly improved communication with their children thanks to the programme.

## Summary of Evaluation Findings 2015

**The following primary conclusions arise from the external evaluation findings about Youth Futures' effectiveness:**

1. The act of joining the programme generates real change among the participants. This is due to the personal attention and sense of acceptance they get from the Mentors.
2. The complex change process that the Youth Futures team tries to generate has an impact on most participants starting the first year, reaching its peak within 3 years. The programme appears to fulfil its impact potential within four years, after which the cost-benefit ratio is unclear.
3. The programme's effects are maintained to a high degree over time; on some variables they intensify for a period of time after the child's programme participation has ended (assessed one and two years after completion).
4. In order to change deeply-rooted participant perceptions of their ability to succeed in life, in-depth, long-term effort has to be made.
5. Participation in Youth Futures is a positive experience for all stakeholders. Satisfaction with the programme was found to be unanimously high – among graduates (95%), current participants (93%), parents (97%) and homeroom teachers (90%).

**Three years from the time of enrolment in the programme the trend toward improvement reaches its peak.** At this point, which marks the end of the child's programme participation period, 92% of the new graduates' parents and 79% of their homeroom teachers feel that the children will be able to continue functioning at a moderate or better level, without the programme's support. And in fact, at the end of the three-year participation period, the picture obtained is one of children with a high degree of personal resilience:

- 98% display joy in life and optimism to a moderate or higher degree;
- 95% take a pro-active approach to challenges and problems
- 89% display a moderate or higher degree of self-capacity
- 61% have faith in their ability to change their lives despite difficult life circumstances.



## Personal Stories *\*Names have been changed to protect privacy*

### **Acco: Amal's\* Search for Hope**

*Amal, a 4<sup>th</sup> year student, lives at home with her parents and siblings. She is a quiet, pleasant and unassuming girl who made sure to arrive to all the private and group meetings on time, although due to her shyness she never really took part in activities. The connection between Amal and her mentor slowly improved and became meaningful to Amal, who started sharing personal life experiences from home and school. As the connection with her mentor was nurtured, Amal's connection with her mother improved – she started attending parent activities, workshops and lectures.*

*The work between Amal and her mentor was mainly based on conversation by way of playing cards and party games. During one of the meetings she said, "I want to tell you something. I can't study in the lounge because my Dad will shout at me and hit me". She repeated it more than once and her mentor told her that the information must be passed on to people who can help her. The school counsellor was informed as well as the head teacher and welfare officials. They met in order to discuss the issue and decided that, according to the law, a report must be issued even if it means that Amal's mother may pull her out of the programme. We are here to help the child.*

*An investigator came to school to speak with Amal and her siblings, each of them separately; each child said the same thing – "Daddy hits me a lot and hurts me..." Today the case is in the hands of the police and the Ministry of Welfare.*

*Amal's mother did not stop participating in the programme, and Amal still comes to the meetings and continues to communicate openly, which amazes her mentor each time. This year, Amal entered the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Her mentor hopes that their connection will grow stronger still and that Amal will continue to be open about her life.*

### **Ilan's\* Success Story**

*Ilan, 11, has been in Youth Futures for 3 years. He is an introverted boy who suffers from anxiety and behavioural problems. Ilan's progress in the programme was slow and there were times that his mentor hit a crisis point with him. During the first two years it was very difficult to reach him. In order to make sure he would turn up to meetings, one of his classmates would accompany him. During the meetings, Ilan would fall apart; he was stressed out which led to behavioural and physical reactions. He started having facial spasms and hysterical fits, throwing things and fleeing the room.*

*During the group meetings, Ilan would swear and act out a lot without even noticing it himself, and then he would blame his friends. He suffered from social exclusion and the children found it difficult to get close to him. Even though they knew that he didn't intend to hurt them, they found it difficult to show him patience for an extended period of time.*

*In an effort to reach him, his mentor connected with the parents, school teacher, the school counsellor and the educational psychologist. To begin with the parents hid information about his emotional health and his therapy from the school and from me. After some difficulty in connecting with his parents, they opened up about his diagnosis, therapy and coping with him at home. Together with his mentor, they all tried out different approaches and sought advice from various therapists.*



After having been through various therapies and supportive frameworks, the change in Ilan is visible. His mentor designed programme for behaviour improvement in school and he signed his name to various tasks in his exercise book. Ilan carefully fulfilled his tasks and started to become more independent; he joined the afternoon learning centre and his studies improved. His circle of friends also grew. Ilan's mother says that in the house he is far less dependent on her; he does his homework by himself and studies on his own for tests. He has even started helping out with his brothers. In class his behaviour has improved enormously; he is able to sit at a table with friends without cursing them or arguing with them. Ilan says that he is really happy; he likes being able to do homework and enjoys having more friends. He also enjoys being praised by his mother and teacher, and his big sister now includes him in games.

### **Maale Yosef**

*"Tomer's family came to live in the Galil from the centre of the country. Tomer was very introverted and had serious communication and concentration problems and would very often escape into his own world of imagination and fantasy. At first his parents were not worried as he would play and speak with friends and cousins at home; there weren't many kids his age on the Moshav. Their worry began however when they received a report from the educational staff at their son's school which reported that Tomer was not taking part in activities and would close up, refusing to play outside with the other children. He was not a happy child and was not doing well academically. Following the school's advice his parents had him tested; a few treatments were recommended to them – Ritalin, emotional therapy, and academic adaption. Tomer's mother stopped working in order to help her son, but Tomer was still progressing slowly and the school's advisor recommended that he join the Youth Futures programme. They were very grateful for the recommendation.*

*When I met Tomer for the first time, I saw a handsome young boy who spoke little, but the little that he did speak was interesting. He did however speak negatively about himself - "I will never succeed". I found out that despite the recommendation by his counsellor and psychologist that he requires others' patience, his teacher thought otherwise. Tomer and I met once a week; he requested that I remind him to turn up as he would forget to do so. Introverted, he would sit quietly. We played games, went outside together during playtime, and slowly and surely he began including other children into his unique world. His wholly imaginative, fantastical and mythological stories soon drew the kids to him, and he became the king of the playground.*

*When a small class opened up in the school Tomer joined it, and a family counsellor started guiding him and his parents. Tomer began to flower and started talking freely with his teachers. The small class was like home, and provided warmth and attention to every detail, whether socially or academically. His connection with the team, the programme and his parents improved drastically. Tomer grew stronger and began to feel that the small size of his class was restricting his academic and social abilities. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade Tomer returned to the mainstream class; he found his place socially, began understanding his limits and his studies and, most importantly, did all of this with a smile on his face. Once, he forgot to come to one of our meetings, and when I asked him if he still needed the help of Youth Futures his reply was "I need it very much. I am sorry that I forget to come - I have concentration difficulties, but I always look forward to the meetings and group activities and I am happy to be in Youth Futures".*

*Tomer has become a pleasant young man who is much admired by his classmates. His friendliness and acceptance of others has given him much standing in the group. He has become a wonder at acrobatics. He said to me once during one of our latter conversations: "Now I will be able to cope without Youth Futures, and I am sure that things will be good for me".*

-Batya\*, Programme Mentor, Maale Yosef



## Breakdown of Youth Futures Participants by Location

<b>Number of Children &amp; Youth &amp; Families 2014-15</b>		
<b>Locality</b>	<b># of Mentors</b>	<b># of Children / Youth / Families</b>
<b>North</b>	-	-
Maale Yosef	6	96
Safed, Hazor & Rosh Pina	20	320
Safed Haredi Sector	4	64
Tiberias	9	144
Migdal Haemek	9	144
Nazareth Illit	9	144
Yokneam	7	112
Beit Shean and Emek Hamayanot	12	192
Acco & Mateh Asher	16	256
Maalot Tarshicha	8	128
Afula	9	144
Kiryat Shimona	8	128
Horfeish	6	96
<b>Total North</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>1968</b>
<b>Centre</b>		
Bnei Brak	10	160
Lod	12	192
Jerusalem	12	192
East Jerusalem	6	96
Tel Aviv	10	160
<b>Total Centre</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>800</b>
<b>South</b>		
Dimona	8	128
Ofakim – Merchavim	11	176
Eilat	8	128
El Kassum	8	128
Netivot - Sdot Hanegev	9	144
Sderot	8	128
Yerucham	6	96
Beer Sheva	12	192
Arad	8	128
Lachish Shafir Kiryat Gat	18	288
<b>Total South</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>1536</b>



## Budget in US\$

<b>Youth Future Budget Implementation September 2014 - August 2015</b>			
<b>(Not Final)</b>			
	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Expenditure Forecast</b>	<b>% Implementation</b>
<b>Total North Prog.</b>	<b>4,568,000</b>	<b>4,340,639</b>	<b>95%</b>
Maale Yosef	207,000	208,549	101%
Safed & Hatzor	750,000	697,000	93%
Safed-Ultra-Orthodox Community	149,000	116,757	78%
Tiberias	329,000	315,619	96%
Central Galilee	648,000	580,922	90%
Yokneam	247,000	265,339	107%
Beit Shean and Emek Hamayanot	498,000	470,779	95%
Akko and Mate Asher	600,000	645,807	108%
Maalot-Tarshicha	297,000	283,951	96%
Afula	326,000	300,872	92%
Kiryat Shmona	304,000	248,742	82%
Horfesh	213,000	206,302	97%
<b>Total Centre Prog.</b>	<b>1,847,000</b>	<b>1,667,396</b>	<b>90%</b>
East Jerusalem	210,000	170,946	81%
Tel Aviv	402,000	367,647	91%
Bnei Brak	363,000	318,226	88%
Lod	448,000	399,788	89%
Jerusalem	424,000	410,789	97%
<b>Total South Prog.</b>	<b>3,574,000</b>	<b>3,264,797</b>	<b>91%</b>
Dimona	299,000	283,722	95%
Ofakim + Merhavim	373,000	345,360	93%
El Kassum	335,000	266,083	79%
Eilat	301,000	283,722	94%
Netivot - Sdot Negev	324,000	315,152	97%
Sderot	307,000	278,500	91%
Yerucham	288,000	230,137	80%
Beer Sheva	405,000	385,398	95%
Arad	301,000	283,193	94%
Lachish Shafir Kiryat Gat	641,000	593,530	93%
<b>Total Youth Futures</b>	<b>9,989,000</b>	<b>9,272,832</b>	<b>92%</b>

