

Youth Futures

Achieving, Excelling, Expanding



2016 Annual Report

Keren Hayesod – United Israel Appeal

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קרן היסוד הישראלי
KEREN HAYESOD UNITED ISRAEL APPEAL

Youth Futures 2016 Annual Report

Presented by Keren Hayesod – United Israel Appeal

Youth Futures, founded in 2006, is The Jewish Agency's high-impact, community-based initiative that addresses the long-term needs of "at-risk" children in a holistic manner. The programme's vision is to provide these children and their families with adequate tools to grow and realize their potential. Using a unique mentoring model, in which each child works with the same Mentor who engages the school, family, and social service network, more positive systemic change occur. Over the past 10 years, the programme has expanded and enriched its operational model to become an effective empowerment programme for youth at risk and their families. Youth Futures operates in 36 communities in Israel's socioeconomic and geographic periphery and in all sectors of Israeli society, including Ultra-Orthodox and Arab, Bedouin, and Druze communities in our East Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Acco, Matte Asher, Lod, Horfeish, and Segev shalom chapters. In our locations that serve Arab youth, Youth Futures promotes coexistence and tolerance among Jewish and Arab staff through joint professional development and training. Staff participates in monthly dialogue sessions in which Mentors work together to overcome challenges and enhance tolerance and partnership. In the long-term, we hope that coexistence among Mentors will encourage tolerance among the youth with whom they work.

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

We are pleased to share that Youth Futures continues to operate in **36** localities in **200** schools the 2015-16 programme year, with about **300** full-time Mentors and **30** Family and Community Coordinators serving nearly **5,000** at-risk youth and about **9,000** direct and indirect beneficiaries (parents and siblings). Our network of over **10,000** alumni attest to the longstanding impact of our programme.

Once again, our Digma Institute external evaluation concluded that at the end of the three years of participation in Youth Futures, a participants experience improvements in all for spheres of focus (persona, social, family, and scholastic) in which Youth Futures is active. Findings indicate the following gains:

Area of Improvement	Jewish Participant	Arab Participants
Self-confidence	84%	88%
Ability to cope with stress and frustration	81%	84%
Social skills	73%	76%
Motivation for success in school	70%	71%
Setting personal boundaries at home (Parents)	75%	71%

Youth Futures continues to monitor its programme graduates to assess the long-term benefits of our programming. The Digma evaluation continues to show that the effects of the programme continue to resonate with alumni, including those 18 year of age, and to positively influence their self-esteem, behavior, and confidence, which simultaneously mitigating potential risk factors. According to Youth Futures alumni, working with Mentors was a profoundly meaningful experience. Nearly 96% of surveyed alumni stated that their Youth Future Mentor greatly contributed to their personal success. Alumni also attribute their experience in Youth Futures with their ability to succeed in school; 79% of programme graduates stated that Youth Futures helped them academically.

As previously reported, Youth Futures significantly increased our work with families in 2014-15. We implemented Family and Community Coordinators who are responsible for working directly with parents in areas such as parenting skills, accessing benefits and social services, and managing finances. In the 2015-16 programme year, 113 parents' groups were offered across all 36 localities. The expansion of our programme has been met with tremendous enthusiasm among our parent participants. According to recent evaluation findings. At the close of the final parents' group session, completed feedback forms yielded the following results:

- 94% reported that the sessions were very interesting to them.
- 88% claimed that they improved their tools and skills as parents.
- 83% stated that the sessions contributed to a better understanding of their children.
- 83% reported an improvement in their relationship with their children.
- 77% reported an improvement in the atmosphere at home.
- 70% reported an improvement in their relationships with their children's school.
- 73% reported that they had developed supportive friendships with other parents in the group.

Youth Futures is also proud to report that it is developing a new intervention strategy for at-risk families in Israel that will focus on early childhood (ages 0-6 years). **Baby Futures** will be a community-based intervention programme that will provide a continuum of services to the entire family unit, in order to achieve tangible results and create sustainable change. The programme will operate at three levels: parent, professional, and municipal. The families we will target have one or more children in the 0–6 age range, and display a variety of risk factors, such as new immigrants from Ethiopia or the former Soviet Union (FSU) who have cultural and language barriers. We aim to serve approximately 100 families in each community, for a total of 400 families each year. Families will primarily be referred to us by local municipalities and through the local Youth Futures chapter. We expect to reach approximately 1,000 individuals each year, including parents, young children, siblings, early childhood educators, and providers of various therapeutic interventions.



Youth Futures in the Community: A Closer Look at its Impact Tzhar Region (Tzfat/Hatzor)

In the northern city of Tzfat which has a population of 32,900, Youth Futures has been active for the past decade. In 2015-16, the programme operated at 94% capacity, serving 179 children and youth from 176 families. Both directly and indirectly, Youth Futures Tzfat reached out to an estimated 530 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 2015-16, most of them in grades 3 to 5. All families served by Youth Futures Tzfat were Jewish. 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 2015-16 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.

Youth Futures works to pool together existing resources in the community so that it can maximize the impact of the programme. A few partnerships in Tzfat include:

- A group of medical students from volunteer once a week at the afternoon learning centre helping children in core subjects such as science and math.
- Children are referred to Aviv Ben Dor, who specializes in movement therapy, and facilitates workshops Youth Futures mentors, children and their parents.
- Girls who are Bat Mitzvah age are able to celebrate their Bat Mitzvah thanks to the Ma'agalim Non-Profit Organization which organizes everything from the invitations, food to entertainment.

Lod

Lod, a mixed Jewish-Arab city of 72,900 individuals (70% Jewish and 30% Arab), is located in Israel's central region, and ranked at the bottom half of Israel's socioeconomic scale (according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics). The city is characterized by rampant poverty, crime and unemployment as well as high numbers of children and youth at risk. It also has low rates of high school matriculation and army service compared to the national average. To combat these issues, Youth Futures has been operating in Lod for the past six years to reach out to children and youth at risk and bring about meaningful social change. Youth Futures works in close cooperation with each city's education, social services, welfare, culture/recreation departments and community organizations.

During 2015-16, a team of 10 Youth Futures Mentors, 2 Family Coordinators (one for the Jewish and one for the Arab sector) and a Project Director provided much needed support to

190 elementary school students and their families in Lod. The programme operates in six of the city's twenty-seven elementary schools. However due to the fact that Mentors were in contact with the families of all participants, the actual number of children and parents who were impacted by Youth Futures during this period was closer to 560. Youth Futures served almost an equal number of more Arab-Israeli and Jewish participants- 52% versus 48%, respectively in 2015-16.

In 2015-16, the overall programme participant profile indicated a highly underprivileged and at-risk population in Lod. Between 30-40% of the families are known to social services and under the care of a social worker. In both the Arab and Jewish sectors, the programme serves a large percentage of children from single-parent and new immigrant families (on average 32%). In more than one-third of the cases, there are more than four children per family.

Activity Highlights in Lod 2015-16

- **Parenting Workshops:** parents took part in 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:** the 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.

Ofakim/Merhavim

Located north-west of Beer Sheva, the city of Ofakim has a population of 25,300 including 25% whom are ultra-Orthodox. Ranked 3 out of 10 on the socioeconomic scale, 12% of the children are from single parent families and there is an unemployment rate of 13.4% (compared to the national average of 6%). The vast majority of residents are Jewish and 40% of the residents are immigrants from Asian and North African countries, (India, Iran, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt) who came in the 1950's and 1960's, mainly, while 35% immigrated in the 1990's from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union. One third of the residents are under the age of 17.

In 2015-16, 12 Youth Futures Mentors provided much needed support to 170 elementary and junior high school students and their families in Ofakim/Merhavim. The programme operates in four of the city's six elementary schools and one of its seven high schools. Since the Mentors were in contact with the families of all participants, the actual number of children and parents who were impacted by Youth Futures during this period was closer to 500.

In Ofakim/Merhavim, the programme serves a large percentage of children from single-parent and new immigrant families (between 35-40%). In most cases, there are 3-4 children per family. In Ofakim, close to two-thirds (59%) had been in the programme for two to three years, with the remainder in their first year of the programme.

Activity Highlights in Ofakim/Merhavim 2015-16

- One of the major programme highlights for children and youth was a special Respite Fun Day at a Water Park together with Youth Futures participants from Kiryat Gat and other southern communities. The children joined over 1,400 children in grades 3-8, their parents, and programme leaders from the southern region on a trip to the Shefa'im Water Park in central Israel for a much needed day of respite.

Personal Stories *Names have been changed to protect privacy

Natan's* Success Story

Natan has been a participant in Youth Futures in Tzfat for the past three years. The youngest of five children, Natan joined Youth Futures when his parents were in the middle of getting divorce. It was a very hard time for Natan emotionally. To this day, his relationship with his father is weak at best. His father does not support Natan, his mother or his siblings financially, which has left them in socio-economic distress.

Natan is a very smart boy and mature for his age. However, during the period when his parents were going through their divorce, Natan was absent from school often. This caused him to fall behind. One of the things that his Mentor worked on with him was improving his attendance and improving his scholastic achievements. Now, Natan is in a much better place. He also developed a strong level of trust with his Mentor which allowed him to express his anxiety and fears and learn how to overcome them.

One of the things that make Natan feel good about himself is that he is well liked by his peers. His Mentor uses this quality as a source of strength to help Natan define himself. One day, Natan hopes to become a chef in a Thai restaurant.

The story of a mother and daughter in Lod whose lives changed thanks to Youth Futures

S, one mother of three who lives in Lod, has a daughter who is a second-year participant in Youth Futures. Twenty years ago, S was in a car accident which left her disabled. She receives a disability stipend from the Israeli government and the family's socio-economic status is extremely poor.

When they met, her daughter's mentor described S as somewhat depressed and passive. She was the kind of person who does not take responsibility for her life, let alone her daughter's. When the mentor asked the mother to take part in the mother's group, S was quite ambivalent and did not want to show any level of commitment. However, already at the first meeting, S began to share her own childhood experiences. The opportunity to meet other mothers like her allowed her to express emotions which she had never shared with anyone.



S's experience in the mother's group empowered S to discover her motivation to join the work force. The Youth Futures mentor is helping S to find out what her rights are and explore job possibilities, while giving her emotional support. This would not have been possible without her involvement in Youth Futures.

Ofek's Story

Ofek has been a participant in Youth Futures in Tzfat/Hatzor HaGlilit for the past four years. When she first joined the programme, Ofek was very quiet and reserved. Her appearance was not well kept and she struggled in school. She relied on her sister and mother, who dropped her off at school every day, for everything, from choosing her clothes in the morning to solving social situations for her.



Ofek's Mentor began to work with her slowly and gain Ofek's trust. Her Mentor then began to involve Ofek's teacher, school psychologist, principal and parents in the process. The meetings with Ofek's parents were especially critical in the change that subsequently evolved. Her Mentor guided Ofek's mother how to let Ofek deal on her own with social situations at school instead of trying to resolve them for her. Together, her mother began to realize that Ofek needs to find the courage herself to cope with her life.

The meetings between Ofek and her Mentor involved simulation game and role playing, with an emphasis on her appearance. By paying more attention to simple things like combing her hair and dressing nicely, Ofek started to gain self-confidence and believe in herself. Her Mentor often sat beside Ofek in class, encouraging her to overcome her fears, to raise her hand and take part in what was going on. Eventually she did. Ofek started to assert herself and succeed in school. Her newly found self-confidence led Ofek to discover her love for drawing and also dance. Her Mentor encouraged Ofek to enrol in an art class and Ofek also helped to decorate the classrooms at school. One day, she led a drawing class one day after school for her peers in Youth Futures. She also joined a dance troupe at the local community centre, something she did not have the confidence to undertake before Youth Futures.

Simultaneously to working with Ofek, her Mentor was in constant contact with Ofek's parents. Her parent's socio-economic situation was extremely poor. Ofek's father had not had a steady job in a long time and the family was in tremendous debt. The Youth Futures Mentor turned to the relevant welfare authorities and helped the family to receive food packages on a regular basis and assist assisted Ofek's father to find a job. With proper intervention and guidance, Ofek's parents are learning how to manage their finances and provide a stable home for their children.

This positive change has had a tremendous impact on Ofek. Today, she has the tools and self-confidence to cope with stress and difficult situations. She is thriving socially and academically. Thanks to her involvement in Youth Futures, Ofek underwent psycho didactic testing which diagnosed her with a slight learning disability. Now she receives assistance in school that helps her compensate for her learning disability and can reach her potential. None of this would have happened without her Mentor and Youth Futures.

Breakdown of Youth Futures Participants by Location

Number of Children & Youth & Families 2015-16		
Locality	# of Mentors	# of Children / Youth / Families
North	-	-
Maale Yosef	6	96
Tzfat, Hazor & Rosh Pina	20	320
Tzfat 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
Total North	123	1,968
Centre		
Bnei Brak	10	160
Lod	12	192
Jerusalem	8	128
East Jerusalem	6	96
Tel Aviv	18	288
Total Centre	54	864
South		
Dimona	8	128
Ofakim – Merchavim	11	176
Eilat	8	128
El Kassum	8	128
Netivot - Sdot Hanegev	9	144
Sderot	8	128
Yerucham	7	112
Beer Sheva	12	192
Arad	8	128
Lachish Shafir Kiryat Gat	18	288
Total South	97	1,552
Total Youth Futures	274	4,384



Budget in US\$

**Youth Future Budget
September 2015 - August 2016**

	Budget
Total North Prog.	\$4,460,700
Maale Yosef	201,000
Safed & Hatzor HaGliit	694,500
Safed-Ultra-Orthodox Community	146,000
Tiberias	320,500
Central Galilee	633,600
Yokneam	266,400
Beit Shean and Emek Hamayanot	480,000
Akko and Mate Asher	611,500
Maalot-Tarshicha	291,600
Afula	318,000
Kiryat Shmona	292,600
Horfesh	205,000
Total Centre Prog.	\$ 1,901,400
East Jerusalem	210,000
Tel Aviv	589,400
Bnei Brak	357,000
Lod	445,000
Jerusalem	300,000
Total South Prog.	\$ 3,496,500
Dimona	292,000
Ofakim + Merhavim	367,500
El Kassum	301,600
Eilat	295,000
Netivot - Sdot Negev	319,000
Sderot	300,000
Yerucham	288,000
Beer Sheva	399,000
Arad	293,400
Lachish Shafir Kiryat Gat	641,000
Total Youth Futures	\$9,858,600

