

The Herta & Paul Amir Faculty of Social Sciences  
**School of Psychological Sciences**



New Child  
Development  
Ambassadors in  
Under-Resourced  
Areas of the World:  
Beyond Disciplinary  
and International  
Boundaries



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Assessment of the "**Impact for Good**"  
of The International MA Program in Child  
Development for Under-Resourced Countries

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<sup>1</sup> Some photos in this report have been produced at various events, and some have been provided by the graduates, who consented to place the pictures in the public domain.

## New *child development ambassadors* operate jointly in under-resourced countries

This is an account of the impact of the International MA program in child development for under-resourced areas of the world, run at the University of Haifa, Israel. Many of the points raised in this summary report were inspired by the words of one of the graduates during his graduation ceremony: *"We are now the new child development ambassadors in our countries."* Ever since, this exciting designation has been echoing in the hearts of all members of the program. The story behind this remarkable new identity of child development ambassadors will guide us – graduates, colleagues, and stakeholders – in our rewarding journey, which includes various paths and important stations along the way.

### Forty countries, five continents, one journey: Ideas, visions, and dreams

"A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step," said Lao Tzu. Our journey began with an idea of Prof. Avi Sagi-Schwartz to foster a new generation of local experts in child development in under-resourced areas of the world. The experts would focus on pressing issues concerning child development, including its implications, in ways that affect the real life of children and their families in experts' countries.

Training a cadre of child development professionals and policy leaders in under-resourced areas of the world is therefore of utmost urgency. The International MA Program in Child Development trains professional leadership to promote the wellbeing of children and their families in countries in need, focusing on the disastrous after effects of HIV, war, political violence, genocide, use of child soldiers, and the like. Child Development Ambassadors confront the problems faced by children in under-resourced areas of the world.

The vision was to establish an International MA Program in Child Development for Under-Resourced Countries, with the main goal of improving the lives of at-risk children in these countries. It was clear that in recent decades, there has been a significant increase in new graduate programs in the field of child development in North America and Western Europe, but these programs focus primarily on issues pertaining to Western societies. At the same time, there were no similar programs in under-resourced countries for studying the subject within the context of their unique cultural, societal, and educational settings. The need for such programs was strongly reflected in the alarm sounded by international agencies, including the United Nations, the World Bank,

the World Health Organization regarding the significant economic and social costs associated with underfunding child and youth services in low income countries.





Seng Raw, a graduate from Myanmar, Kachin children in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps

This vision and ambition are consistent with the statement of Mr. Anthony Lake, former Executive Director of UNICEF: *“We must do more to reach all children in need, wherever they live, wherever they are excluded and left behind... If we overcome the barriers that have kept these children from the services they need and that are theirs by right, then millions more will grow up healthy, attend school, and live more productive lives.”*



Benjamin Asamoah, Ghana, provides support services for the rehabilitation and integration into school of a vulnerable boy who had been neglected and abandoned, and for a child identified with a disability

### An important cornerstone of the program: Bridging the science-practice gap

To have an impact on the lives of at-risk children in developing countries, the program needed to bridge the science-practice gap at the international level. A unique international focus and excellent collaborative relationships with scientists, educators, and economists at major international institutions, enabled the International MA Program in Child Development for Under-Resourced Countries to do just that. Leaving the ivory tower and letting knowledge produced in

academia be translated into practice and day-to-day reality is of utmost and immediate importance, especially in very low-income countries, according to the definition of the World Bank.

Therefore, the Program was launched to advance the following objectives:

- ✚ Provide scientific and professional skills in applying basic knowledge in child development research to various issues, including childcare, nutrition, infant and young children morbidity and mortality, academic motivation in schools, children raised in orphanages and other institutions, foster care, adoption, and effective parenting.
- ✚ Train professional leadership to enhance the wellbeing of children and their families in countries in need, with a focus on prevention and intervention. The mission of the leadership includes promoting family functioning and community network, as well as fostering new generations of child development experts in low SES countries.

## Our fellow travelers: Partners, friends, and affiliates



The Program supports the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015, which provides a shared commitment to its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Agenda urgently calls for action and global partnership by all countries, developed and developing alike. We believe that our Program, in all modesty, is a small but important organ in the complex organism whose goal is to improve health, welfare, and education.

Major players, organizations, and foundations partnering with the Program or expressing interest in it, include UNICEF, World Bank, Open Society Foundation, Vital Capital Fund,<sup>2</sup> Bernard van Leer Foundation, Jacobs Foundation, Two Lilies Fund,<sup>3</sup> RISE Institute,<sup>4</sup> the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN), Society for International Development (SID), International Step by Step Association (ISSA), Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), MASHAV,<sup>5</sup> Israeli embassies around the world, and foreign embassies in Israel.

<sup>2</sup> Vital Capital Fund is a private equity fund that invests in opportunities that simultaneously enhance the quality of life of communities in rapidly developing nations, primarily in Africa. It is now the sixth year that the program enjoys the support of this fund.

<sup>3</sup> The Two Lilies Fund is a donor-advised fund in the United States whose monies these six years have been given to the Emotional and Professional Development Workshop (see page 11), alongside support for excellence awards.

<sup>4</sup> The RISE Institute for Reconstruction and International Security through Education, Washington DC, supports activities of early childhood development in countries affected by conflict or extreme poverty.

<sup>5</sup> MASHAV – the Hebrew acronym for Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, which is overseen by the Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The goals of the Program are also consistent with the main strategic goals of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD):

<https://www.srkd.org/>



Goal 2: Communicate: exchange and translate scientific knowledge about human development and about applying this knowledge to policies and practices for improving human wellbeing.

Goal 3: Integrate racial, cultural, economic, national, and contextual diversity in all spheres of developmental science.

Goal 4: Build capacity: infrastructure, resources, and human capital for developmental science and its application... internationally.

Goal 5: Engage members at all career levels and across disciplinary and methodological traditions.



The goals of the program are also in line with the mission of the Early Childhood Development Action Network (ECDAN):

<https://connect.ecdan.org/home>

Similarly to ECDAN's goals, we also wish to catalyze collective action on behalf of young children and their families around the world by connecting with global and regional partners, facilitating knowledge exchange and learning, and coordinating advocacy for increased investment in quality services.

Our graduates perceive themselves as Child Development Ambassadors. This goes hand-in-hand with the main strategic goals of the SRCD, the UN, and ECDAN. It is gratifying to see how the Ambassadors cross disciplinary and international boundaries and make a remarkable contribution to the wellbeing of children worldwide.



Where does all this take place?

The Program includes the following classes: Early detection and screening of developmental problems, Cognitive and language development and emerging literacy, Child development from a cross-cultural perspective, Parenting and attachment, Statistics for developmental sciences, Developmental science and socioemotional development, Emotional and professional development, Disability and quality of life, Sleep and development: Biological processes and caregiving in cultural contexts, Developmental psychopathology: Internal and external risk factors, Selected issues in child development research, Treatment of developmental psychopathology, Observation and evaluation methods, Early Intervention programs, Program seminar.

Many online programs are being offered these days by various institutions worldwide, especially since the outbreak of COVID-19. Our one-year MA program, by contrast, is taught on the campus of the University of Haifa, in Israel, and it is offered by the Center for the Study of Child Development, in the Faculty of Social Sciences, and by the International School (a full description of the program can be found in the attached [brochure](https://tinyurl.com/9dpkfj87)).<sup>6</sup>

Various features of the Haifa Program, including daily social and cultural activities, produce a coherent and integrated experience. The face-to-face presence and interaction between participants is an important component of this experience.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/9dpkfj87>





In class

## Participants come to Haifa from all over the world

To date, with six cohorts over six years, the Program has attracted students from 27 under-resourced countries in Africa, Asia, Euro-Asia, and South America. It has produced 127 graduates, selected from 1,200 applicants! Most graduates are already leaders in the field in their countries, which include Albania, Belarus, Botswana, Cameroon, Chile, Congo, Ethiopia, Gambia, Georgia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Palestinian Authority, Philippines, Rwanda, Uganda, Vietnam, Tanzania, and Zimbabwe (see Table – Program graduates by country and continent – in the [link](#)).<sup>7</sup>

We also have graduates from established and emerging developed countries (Australia, Canada, China, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Netherlands, Poland, Turkey, Slovenia (including Roma community), South Africa, Uruguay, and the US), who are also interested in nurturing the lives of children in under-resourced countries. Here is what one of our Canadian graduates had to say: “After graduation, I was able to implement my project while still in Israel, working for ‘Save a Child’s Heart’” (an organization that brings to Israel children from under-resourced areas of the world who are in urgent need of heart surgery).



Randi Weiss, from Canada, "Save a Child's Heart"

<sup>7</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/2b5pzspd>



## An interdisciplinary journey: Where education, health, welfare (and more) meet

The professional backgrounds of our graduates include: Pediatrics, nursing, psychology, psychiatry, physical therapy, occupational therapy, anthropology, law, education, sociology, media, home economics, library studies, social work and social welfare, speech pathology and therapy, as well as sisterhood and priesthood. These professionals are likely to have a substantial impact in their home countries in the fields of education, welfare, and healthcare.

This international academic initiative is innovative and unique in that it brings together talented professionals from diverse backgrounds. Upon returning to their countries, the graduates, regardless of their professional field, become children's ambassadors, as they refer to themselves, committed to advancing the wellbeing and welfare of young children. Program participants are initially selected based on their strong potential ability to implement their ideas whatever their professional affiliation may be.

*One impressive case in point is the "confession" of one of the priests that "faith in religion is indeed very important and helpful, but one needs further professional knowledge to fill in what religion and faith cannot provide in and of itself."*

Abang Fidelis, a priest and psychologist from Cameroon





Children's Ministry in the Church in Ghana (our graduate, Emmanuel Nyarko-Tetteh, bottom left)

Dr. Constance Kurauvone, child psychiatrist from Zimbabwe



Patience Dali, nurse from Kenya, holding a 2-day old baby who was rejected by her parents because they had hoped she would be a boy

Essabela Fewo, a nurse from Cameroon, in health education on illnesses, child feeding, and nutrition



Marwa Gantous, a social worker guiding early childhood development (ECD) activity in the Arab community in Israel



## Our crowning activities

The various stations, cornerstones, and accomplishments described in this report have been made possible by many classes, activities, meetings, and field trips we undertook. Among these, there are two crowning activities at the heart of our joint endeavor.

### *1. Emotional and Professional Development Workshop*

One of the highlights of the Program is the Emotional and Professional Development Workshop. These weekly meetings focus on creating a secure base for the students by providing a supportive environment as well as a space for reflection on personal inner processes, including those evoked by the academic challenges and materials. The students have the opportunity to raise issues like personal childhood memories, relationships, and past traumas. Equally important, they can bring up current matters about being away from home, coping with different emotions, group and interpersonal communication, challenges of the Program, and dreams of the future, to name a few. Among the tools used are writing, painting, storytelling, therapeutic cards, and various creative interventions. Most students come from cultures where such experiences are not common practice, which is why we feel that this workshop has become such a high point of the Program.



Expressive writing workshop in the city of Acre: Combining professional learning with leisure and fun in the ancient city.



## *2. Final project: Dreams, innovations, and challenges*

The final project that all graduates develop integrates many of the themes to which they have been exposed. The projects, which represent their plans and dreams, can be of two types: research and applied. In a research project, students design a study based on a theoretical model or a construct that they have learned in the program. They discuss the novelty and significance of their research questions, as well as cross-cultural aspects of the project. In an applied project, students design a program, such as a prevention or intervention program or a professional training program for their colleagues or their trainees. A concluding, high point of formative significance is the poster session at the end of the academic year, where all the graduates present and discuss their final projects with the academic staff, senior officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ambassadors and senior diplomats from the various diplomatic missions in Israel, various global ECD-related organizations, and others. The projects featured in the [appendix](https://tinyurl.com/4hxddjmz)<sup>8</sup> illustrate the innovation, originality, creativity, richness, and spirit of the graduates. The poster session is an exciting journey in itself, and stakeholders are invited to appreciate the 127 projects.



Posters session with final projects

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<sup>8</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/4hxddjmz>



Nepali Ambassador in Israel near the poster of Aarju Niraula, a Nepali graduate (nurse)



Nigerian Ambassador in Israel near the poster of Dr. Joseph Mayowa, Nigerian graduate (pediatrician)



Ms. Aimee Ibanda, First Secretary of the Democratic Republic of Congo in Israel, near the poster of Samuel Mayele Makelele, a graduate from DRC

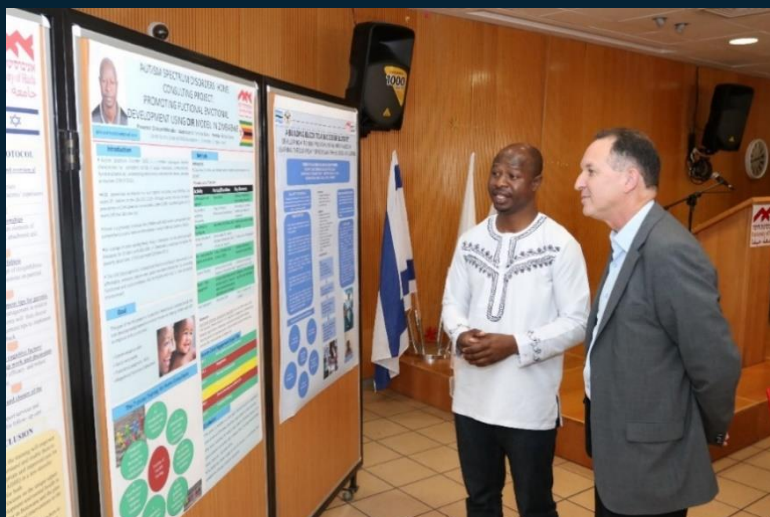


Liana Ghent, director of the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), near the poster of Liana Mkhathvari, a graduate from Georgia





Joseph Ochura, a graduate from Kenya, with Dr. Lynette Okengo, Executive Director, the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN); General Consul of Kenya in Tel-Aviv; Daniella Ben-Attar, Representative in Israel for Bernard van Leer Foundation



Dickson Mharadze, a Zimbabwean graduate, with Ambassador Gil Haskel, Chief of Israeli State Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs



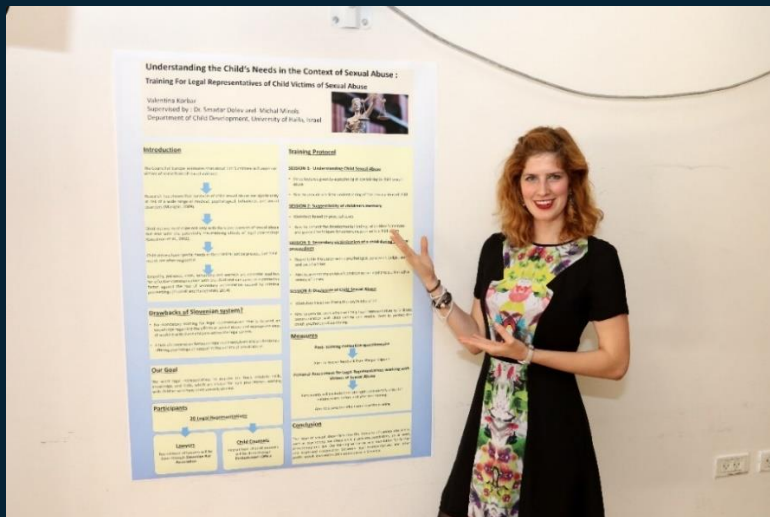
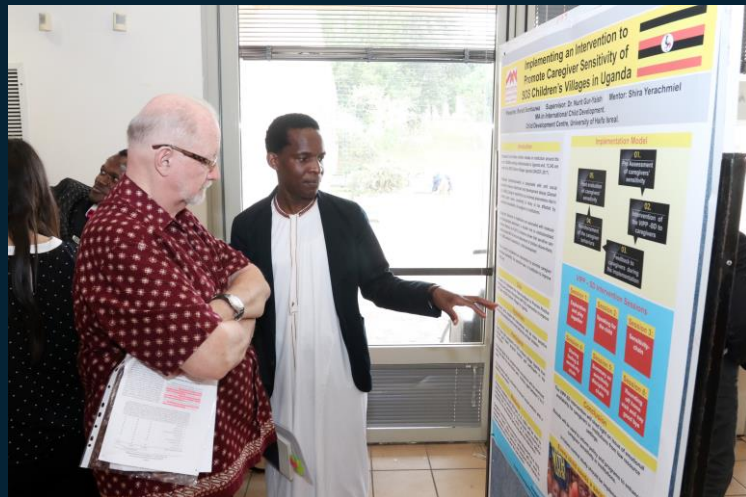


Emeldah Mmapula Mathogojane, a graduate from Botswana, with Ambassador Gil Haskel, Chief of Israeli State Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Dr. Pyae Phyo Aung and Samuel Mayele Makelele, graduates from Myanmar and Congo, with Dr. Lynette Okengo, Executive Director, the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfeCN), and Dr. Emily Vargas-Barón, Director, RISE Institute

Ronald Ssentuuwa, a graduate from Uganda, with Dr. Sheldon Shaeffer, representative of the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC)



Valentina Korbar, a graduate from Slovenia discussing sexual abuse

## Beyond academics and professionalism: Social and cultural life

We are confident that our Ambassadors became who and what they are not only because of the academic and professional training they received, but also because they were together over the entire year of the Program, including various social and cultural activities. This has consolidated them into one extended family, which continues to be reflected in daily WhatsApp communications, mutual visits, the celebration of exciting events, and the sharing of sympathy, empathy, and support during various difficult times and crises.

### *Opening event*



Singing ethnic songs



Of special note is the traditional opening event each year, in Tel Aviv, at the African Studies Gallery, owned and operated by Mrs. Ora and Mr. Eytan Stibbe, close friends and generous donors to the Program. It takes place at the beginning of the academic year with the goal of embracing the students and letting them feel how warmly welcomed they are by the staff of the Program, the university administration, University of Haifa Friends Associations, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, their country's ambassadors, and many other friends. The following photos, a small sample of the many we have, can give you an idea of some of the joint social-cultural excitement the event generates.



Eytan Stibbe welcomes incoming students in his African Studies Gallery



Incoming students introducing themselves



Ambassador  
of Myanmar  
welcomes  
the students



Ambassador of  
Uruguay welcomes  
the students

Ambassador of Ethiopia  
chats with two incoming  
students from Ethiopia



Dancing



Gloria Ackah, Ghana, in a dance performance

The Program also brings together Ambassadors – Albania and Myanmar



Opening event in 2020 just before COVID-19



*Sample of other social-cultural activities throughout the year*



Prof. Ben Artzi, former rector, talking about the history of the German Colony, Haifa



Lighting Hanukkah candles at the professor's home

Having fun on the beach



Sightseeing in Haifa by students from three continents





Sightseeing in Jerusalem



Palham Oyiye, student from Ghana in a kibbutz infants' house

Manju Wagle, student from Nepal, in a " Namaste" greeting to kibbutz toddlers



Patience Dali (Kenya) and Rusudan Bochorishvili (Georgia), on a visit to a kibbutz pre-school



Celebration of Purim Holiday in class



Essabela Fewo and Patience Dali, nurses from Cameron and Kenya, spending weekly social time as volunteers with Holocaust survivors



## Measuring the "impact for good" of the program: How?

One hundred and nineteen out of a total of 127 graduates responded to our survey, which included questions about the impact of the program on their personal, family, and professional life (see the [appendix<sup>9</sup>](#) for the questionnaire). Note that at the time of data collection, the sixth cohort was still in Haifa. All six cohorts responded to most of the questions, except for those dealing with what happened after graduation, for which we had data only from five cohorts (N=97). The survey speaks loudly and clearly about the life-changing impact of the Program.

### *Products of our program and assessment*

#### *Strengthening and upgrading professional skills: Game changers and role models*

Ninety-eight percent of our graduates reported that they enhanced their professional skills thanks to the Program and revolutionized their professional infrastructure, which turned them into *game changers, role models, and sources of knowledge* for others. The graduates reported that they acquired skills enabling them to communicate, exchange, and translate knowledge, all of which they put to work in:

- ✕ Developing a more holistic multi-system interdisciplinary understanding of the early years
- ✕ Adapting a more research-oriented approach and large-scale implementations of cutting-edge developmental knowledge
- ✕ Acquiring analytical and critical thinking
- ✕ Reaching beyond a traditional discipline (pediatrics, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, etc.)
- ✕ Obtaining better understating of typical and atypical development
- ✕ Establishing child development centers and well-child clinics
- ✕ Being engaged in decision-making processes at the national and international level
- ✕ Implementing translational knowledge and acting as change agents, including knowledge dissemination in the public domain, sharing information with the media, advocacy, developing and implementing training programs, conducting fine-tuned observations, and designing evaluation methods

A pediatrician from Ghana said in the survey: *"Parents/families with children with special needs have been flooding the outpatient department because of the awareness campaigns we have been organizing. We are succeeding in fighting the stigma."*

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<sup>9</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/266p9ak7>



### *Eye-opener impact on personal lives*

Ninety-six percent reported that the Program affected them as individuals. Some described it as an *eye-opener* leading to a change in how they perceived their own childhood experiences and themselves today. The many testimonials we received can be categorized into the following themes: Retrospective reflection on past adversities and traumas; introspection regarding one's risk and resilience factors; healing and coping with past harsh or abusive parenting they had experienced, and becoming ready to break the intergenerational cycle of trauma; post-traumatic growth; alterations and improvement in own parenthood perceptions, style, and practices (e.g., avoiding negative and detrimental intergenerational transmission); improvement in self-esteem and self-perception; self-acceptance; capacity for forgiveness and resolution.

A pediatrician from Nigeria: *"Because I was able to talk about those traumatic childhood experiences, I felt relieved, it's like I had space and then more energy."*

An early child development educator from Ghana: *"In these group meetings, I was healed within, the pieces of me came together, so I was whole."*

A priest from Cameron: *"When you are emotionally balanced, you can work better, you can help people."*

### *Improving family life*

Eighty-nine percent observed a change in their family life since they returned to their home countries, with an impact on the relationship with their family of origin, spouse, and children. Themes similar to those revealed at the personal level became apparent here as well. For example, participants spoke of improving and reflecting on marital relations; altering parenting practices; significant changes in the relationship with their family and community. The following quotations speak for themselves:

*"After my return from the University of Haifa to Georgia, the knowledge, experience, and skills that I had acquired helped me promote my family welfare both economically and emotionally."*

*"I have become more rational, organized, smart, well equipped, and helpful, as I understand my feelings and thoughts better. I can listen and prioritize and make the best decisions for my family, which also led me to help others and 'share Haifa wisdom' as I call it to my spouse, my friends, and colleagues. I think once a person has let the rational seed into the body, which does all the magic, it grows eventually, blossoms into an evidence-based practitioner and a confident, happy human being."*

### *Heightened employer attention*

Seventy percent observed a change in the attention their employer or director paid to the need to support more students from their country in attending the program in Israel. Several directors considered the graduates as providers of in-service training based on the expertise they obtained in Haifa. Some directors wished to develop partnerships with the University of Haifa. Although most respondents observed a positive change in the attitude of their employers, yet a substantial minority reported otherwise.

### *Upgrading of position and status*

Seventy-one percent of our graduates experienced a change and an upgrade in the status of the position they held since they returned to their home countries, 27% reported no change in their status, and 2% reported their status to have worsened. The positive change in status reflects several impressive accomplishments at the national and international levels, with a large number of graduates being promoted to senior positions. A few examples at the national level: Overseeing ECD activities in the Ivory Coast (TRECC program, supported by the Jacobs Foundation), Child Helpline Manager overseeing all child protection and parenting programs in the organization in Tanzania, Head of preventive care and chairperson of the district technical advisory committee in Botswana, Deputy director in the welfare system in Myanmar, Pediatrician becoming a senior consultant to the government on child protection issues in Ghana, Head of early childhood care and development (ECCD) unit in Ghana, a nurse in Liberia assigned to lead policy issues in the field of child health, and another nurse in Kenya, being put in charge of the nursing unit in a neonatal department and becoming a trainer.



Florence Koroma

To conclude this impressive list of promotions, one of the graduates became the Chairperson for the Higher Education Consortium for Early Childhood Development in Liberia, representing the President of Liberia in different dialogues and interactions with stakeholders interested in education.

We noted a change not only in the promotion of graduates but found also that people in the same positions were empowered and expanded their activities in the field of child development, for example, strengthening child protection in Ghana. A pediatrician from Nigeria stated that although her status cannot change at the institution where she works because they are clinically oriented, she has been able to apply the knowledge she gained without hindrance, enriching her current position.

## *Leadership change*

It is important to note that many of the graduates began their studies already in high-powered positions, and therefore did not report promotion, but they did report a meaningful leadership change in their professional capacity. One impressive example is the founder of an important NGO operating an enrichment center for children in Ethiopia, who already before joining the program was engaged in disseminating knowledge and promoting skills across the country. Sahilu Baye was invited to give a TED-like presentation during the "Impact for Good" visit of Israel's President, Reuven Rivlin, in Ethiopia, in May of 2018.

His lecture attracted the attention of President Rivlin and of the other distinguished guests and the audience at the large gathering, which included the President of Ethiopia, ministers, members of parliament. The linked [presentation](#)<sup>10</sup> of this lecture speaks for itself, also with respect to the professional gains Sahilu Baye has made.



Ambassador Gil Haskel, Chief of State Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel, acknowledging the TED contribution of Sahilu Baye in Addis Ababa

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<sup>10</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/36ed5ebz>

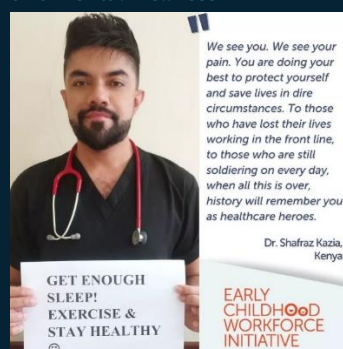
## *A move to the international arena*

Some of the graduates moved from the national to the international arena. For example, a Nepali graduate in the field of education and political science is now employed at the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in Uganda. A Slovenian preschool teacher graduate from the Roma community is now at the headquarters of the International Step by Step Association (ISSA), in the Netherlands, serving as senior program officer and coordinator of the Romani Early Years Network (REYN) – a Europe-wide initiative of ISSA that promotes access to high-quality early childhood development for Roma and Traveler children. A pediatrician from Myanmar was engaged by a School Feeding Unit of the UN World Food Program and by Save the Children International as a nutrition advocacy advisor, and was assigned to the Secretariat of the Scaling up Nutrition Civil Society Alliance. Another pediatrician, from Kenya, was appointed Head of Disease Prevention and Mental Wellness, and is managing programs for the Muslim communities in Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Burundi and Namibia.



Aljoša Rudaš from a Roma preschool in Slovenia moved to ISSA as a senior program officer

Dr. Shafraz Kazia, pediatrician from Kenya, Head of Disease Prevention and Mental Wellness



Dr. Zar Ni Htethlaing, pediatrician from Myanmar, School Feeding Unit of the UN World Food Program and Save the Children International



### *New academic accomplishments*

There have also been notable accomplishments at the academic level: a deputy head of a college in Kenya, a deanship in Liberia, a department chair in Liberia, and a director of research and communication at a college in Ethiopia. Moreover, several graduates have completed doctoral studies, others are currently attending doctoral programs, and a few will begin doctoral studies in September 2021.



Sofia Mulu in Ethiopia

Alphonso Wright in Liberia



Florence Koroma, dean of education, graduation ceremony in Liberia, with the young generation.

## *Capacity building*

Overall, we observe significant capacity building by graduates, consistent with the strategic goals of most national and international ECD organizations and foundations. Many graduates have been promoted to high-power, influential positions at the national and international levels in child protection, child care, and welfare. Seventy-five percent of our graduates whose position was upgraded attributed their promotion to their studies in the Program, and reported a change in their personal social mobility.

## *Impact in the human service sector and interaction with high government officials*

Sixty-six percent of graduates reported changes in early childhood development or the human services sector in their country since graduation. Some have been able to interact with high government officials, including heads of states and ministers. Below are a few examples from various countries:

- ✕ Many stakeholders recognize the importance of the early years and of including child development aspects in the new education strategy for the Roma community
- ✕ ECD has been declared a national priority by the government in the Ivory Coast and in Liberia
- ✕ A policy shift directed increasing investment in early childhood development in Botswana and in Ghana
- ✕ There has been increased access to quality ECD in Tanzania and enhanced EC interventions at the national level in Myanmar and in Rwanda
- ✕ In Myanmar, an ECCD Diploma Program was established by the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the Open Society Foundation, and a 3-month ECCD certificate program was created at the Ministry of Social Welfare, in collaboration with UNICEF
- ✕ The curriculum for ECD training is being updated at universities in Kenya and Liberia
- ✕ New ECD networks are evolving, with a focus on pediatrics, nutrition, and education in Tanzania
- ✕ An alumnus from Liberia was appointed to serve as focal person for the Africa Early Childhood Network
- ✕ Child development is being advocated at the Ministry of Health in Botswana
- ✕ A National and Provincial Early Childhood Development CAUCUS group was formed by a graduate from Nepal
- ✕ Psychological and emotional support is being introduced in hospital wards of HIV/AIDS infected children in Cameroon
- ✕ National guidelines for daycare centers are being drafted in Tanzania
- ✕ Service provision for vulnerable children has been upgraded in Ghana
- ✕ Positive changes are being reported and a new law on inclusive preschools has been enacted in Georgia



Seng Raw with Israeli Ambassador in Yangon receiving a grant for a joint Israel-Myanmar collaboration



**DESPEDIDA SE ESPECIALIZARÁN EN ISRAEL**

Mattanya Cohen, embajador de Israel, con los estudiantes guatemaltecos, Dr. Carlos Dionicio López y el licenciado Allan Monterroso, quienes continuarán sus estudios superiores en ese país, como parte del Plan de Cooperación con el Benemérito Comité Pro ciegos y sordos de Guatemala.

FOTO PRENSA LIBRE: CORTESÍA

Allan Rousselin with Israeli Ambassador in Guatemala for a joint Israel-Guatemala collaboration



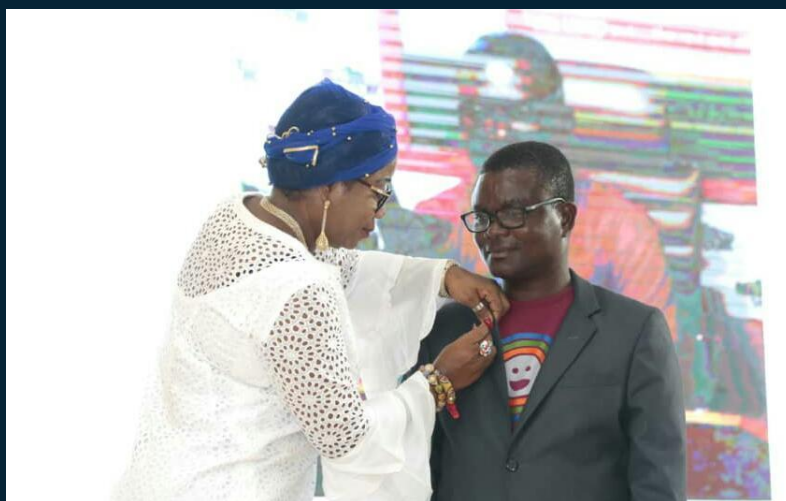
Lloyd Nyirenda with Minister of Gender and Child Affairs, Malawi



Students with the President of Liberia, Dr. George Manneh Weah, and below a discussion around the table with the President, the delegation from Liberia, and Adv. Itzhak Wolf, Honorary Consul of Liberia in Israel



Emmanuel Nyarko-Tetteh with the Ghana Minister of Gender, Children, and Social Protection



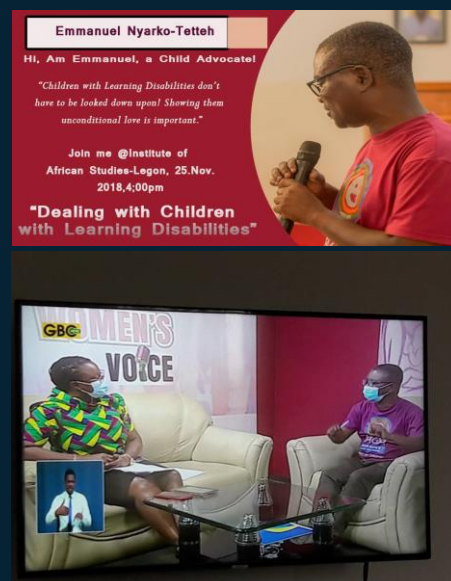


## Media, public events, and conferences

As Child Development Ambassadors, the alumni pay a great deal of attention to the role of the media, public events, and conferences, and the important platform these represent. Many Ambassadors share information on television and radio stations, social media (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), and at public events. They raise a host of topics related to child development, with implications for prevention, intervention, public policy, and legislation.



Yukiko Amnon, Liberia



Emmanuel Nyarko-Tetteh, Ghana



Allan Rousselin, Guatemala

Genoveva Chuchuba, Tanzania





Patience Dali, Kenya, at the first AfECN conference

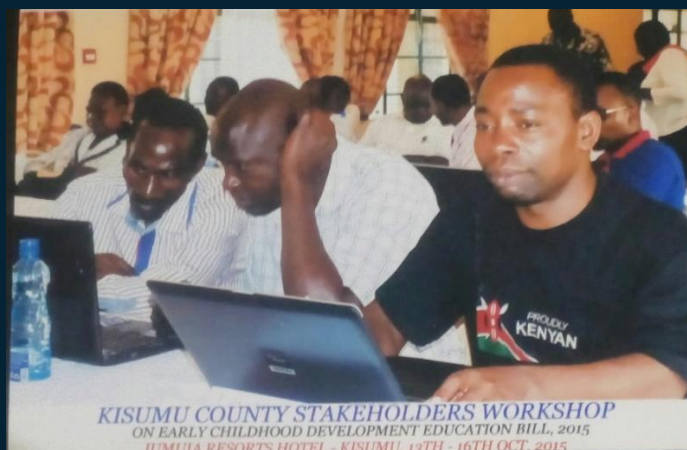
Itozya Onesmo, Tanzania, Grace Mwangi, Kenya, Jane West, USA, and Avi Sagi-Schwartz, Israel, at the second AfECN conference in Tanzania



	
<i>Gertrude Abbey</i>	<i>Dr. Nana Esi Gaisie-Tetteh</i>
<i>Speech &amp; Language therapist</i>	<i>Physician &amp; Child development expert</i>
Communication in children With autism	Emotional Regulation in Autism
<b>SUNDAY 21ST JUNE 2020 @ 4PM CMT</b>	
<b>Zoom id: 872 5926 6567 Password: 7v8CTX</b>	

Dr. Nana Esi Gaisie,  
Ghana









Kennedy Lwalaman,  
preschool educator  
in Kenya



## *Networking*

Fifty-eight percent of graduates have noticed an increase in the involvement of the multilateral international and national sector in ECD in their country since graduation. Forty percent have been directly involved in networking and collaborative activities. This includes the following organizations and projects:

### International

-  World Bank
-  UNICEF
-  Bernard Van Leer Foundation
-  ISSA
-  WHO
-  World Forum Foundation (National Representatives and Global Leaders, Zimbabwe, Albania, Myanmar)
-  AfECN
-  Mount Carmel International Training center Haifa

### National

-  Tanzania Early Childhood Network and Expert Association
-  Early Childhood Professionals Association and ECD Network, Kenya
-  Early Childhood Development Network in Liberia
-  ECD Coalition Malawi
-  National Early Childhood Committee in Ghana
-  Carter Center in Liberia

Equally important are the many ongoing daily interactions among graduates across the globe concerning personal, family, professional, and political matters – both happy and sad – deepening their bond as friends and colleagues, and creating a global village.

From his Haifa office, Prof. Avi Sagi-Schwartz, the Head of the Program, shares in the excitement of thousands of WhatsApp messages with all six cohorts. He tries to respond to every social media post about a workshop a graduate held or an opinion piece a graduate wrote, participating in the celebrations of his global family. He includes graduates in international presentations about the Program and makes connections with interested funders in their geographic or programmatic area.



### *Final project: Challenges and achievements*

Implementing their final project in their country turns out to be a major challenge for graduates. The main obstacles include (59%):

1. Differences between their current place of employment and the setting for which the project was designed.
2. Lack of sufficient budget, available time, and other necessary resources in their countries.
3. Bureaucratic difficulties in obtaining the agreement and cooperation of the public sector.

Despite the obstacles, many graduates were successful in securing partial funding, which enabled them to deploy their projects. Others found creative ways around the lack of funds. The following examples are illustrative of the graduates' solutions:



Fatuma Kamramba, a graduate from Tanzania, is a leader in SOS in Zanzibar



*"I am working at the SOS Children's Villages in Zanzibar and Mainland Tanzania to implement my final project through SOS's Family Strengthening and Alternative Care Program, where I train parents and caregivers in taking care of children who have lost parental care."*



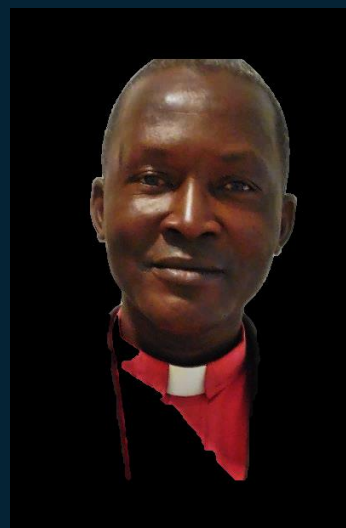
*"I have implemented more than 15 projects in Ethiopia, with 200 child caregivers, based on my final project. ... The project titles are 'Attachment and Socio-emotional Development of Children from Birth to 6 years of age' and 'Psychosocial Development of Children from Birth to 12 years of age.' Our organization believes that knowledge transfer is very important to make a change in the lives of millions of socially, emotionally, mentally, and physically disadvantaged children, especially those children who lost their loved ones due to natural and manmade calamities, and who are living in our most forgotten orphanages."*

*"My project was mainstreaming as part of my UNICEF work in Nepal."*

*"My project has been completed. In collaboration with the Department of Inclusive Education at the Ministry of Education in Liberia, a curriculum was developed for the training of teachers in all elementary schools. The Department is waiting for funding in order to launch the program."*

*"We developed a project proposal based on my final project, submitted it to an international donor organization, and obtained the grant. As a result, we have invited an international expert in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and we have implemented the model in 10 kindergartens in one of the regions of Georgia. It was a pilot project, and we are going to proceed with this work and implement the model in other regional kindergartens."*

*"In Liberia, The Wisconsin International University adopted my final project as a short-term certificate course of studies for Early Childhood Teachers and Caregivers. The program started and it is being implemented in two schools. There are fifteen teachers and caregivers from two private schools currently undertaking the training. These two schools will become demonstrations for Early Childhood Education"*



Rev. Gehleigbe Bobson Ble,  
Liberia



Shikha Kashyap, empowerment activities and celebrations with daughters of commercially exploited sex workers, in Kamathipura, Mumbai

*"I passed my project on to my director from my former workplace. I was happy to see during my previous visit in India that my intervention project is still being implemented with the daughters of commercially exploited sex workers in Mumbai. It was basically a project to improve the self-concept of the girls living in the red-light district of Mumbai."*

Elsewhere, new senior positions created opportunities for the implementation of the final project. As noted above, Aljoša Rudaš, a graduate from the Roma community in Slovenia, was recruited to work at the headquarters of ISSA in Leiden, the Netherlands. He said: *"Part of our focus is on capacity building/professional development and developing resources around Europe and Central Asia. In the context of our quality ECD and by embracing diversity, I am able to implement parts of my final project."*

Finally, ideas raised in the final projects facilitated training, teaching, mentoring, and other practice activities. For example:

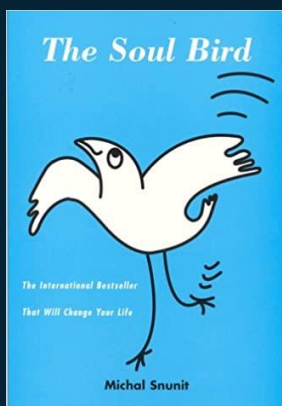
*"Training was provided in Ethiopia for 50 refugee foster parents and 25 refugee outreach volunteers who sought to enhance their capacity to recognize and detect mental health problems among refugee children.... A one-day sensitization workshop was organized by JRS in collaboration with UNHCR, with the aim to sensitize government officials and non-profits serving refugees. The workshop aimed to strengthen partnership and networking in mental healthcare service delivery."*

## New initiatives

Above and beyond the final project, 73% of graduates reported to have started working on other projects, made possible by knowledge and skills acquired during their studies in Haifa. Projects were implemented at many levels, including the microsystem and macrosystem: advocacy; pre-service (e.g., opening and upgrading various academic programs) and in-service training; public education; implementation of intervention programs studied in Haifa; media activities; writing of policy papers, ECD manuals, and children books; policy change; demonstration projects; budget allocation; construction of new centers for children with special needs; expanding ECD knowledge within the religious system, and more. A telling example is the shift from corporal punishment in teaching environments in Kenya to a sensitive discipline model. Overall, the activities affected both personal and professional aspects of the graduates' lives, as well as their communities.



A graduate, Lloyd Nyirenda, with ECD stakeholders in Malawi, meeting to raise awareness of ECD issues, with a call from children: SEND ME TO ECD



A unique project was the translation into Burmese of the book "Soul Bird." This bestselling children's book, originally written in Hebrew, has a simple message, suggesting that deep within every person lives a soul bird, a creature that has thoughts, feelings, and dreams. When we listen to the soul bird, we can understand why we behave the way we do. And once we understand our behavior, we can begin to live a happier, more fulfilling life. Our graduate, Seng Raw, translated the book into Burmese. Seng also translated two children's stories on COVID-19 and social distancing, and shared them publicly in Myanmar.



Burmese Translation of "Soul Bird"  
by Seng Raw



## Innovation and creativity with developmental relevance



Green cards to players in appreciation of good behavior

Fatty, one of the graduates, familiarized the community with an exciting initiative: *Equalizer Goal*. In Hebrew, the expression is a pun that reflects the meaning of the term in soccer, but can also mean "*Gateway to Equality*", with reference to people of different origins. The objective of the Israeli educational,



Lamin Fatty in action as a referee in a township near Haifa

Some of the graduates have been able to engage in innovative thinking "out of the box", which sheds further light on how we can intervene creatively in the field of child development. In Gambia, Lamin



Lamin Fatty with the Israeli Deputy Chief of Mission at Dakar Embassy, and staff of the embassy at a soccer match, after launching of the Equalizer

social, and sports project is to advance children of low socioeconomic status. It uses soccer to bring together children from different communities, in order to develop values of mutual respect, tolerance, and the breakdown of barriers between communities. Lamin was in contact with the Israeli head of the project to promote it in his country, so it was natural for him to introduce his classmates in Haifa to the project. The entire class participated in a soccer activity of this kind, where a volunteer referee gives out "green cards" to players in appreciation of good behavior and fairness, replacing the yellow or red warning cards typically used in soccer. This is a compelling illustration of how we can connect between positive attitudes associated with a sports activity (which is usually aggressive), and hidden concepts of prosocial child development.

## COVID-19 Challenges and accomplishments (Cohort of 2019-2020)



Program seminar class over zoom

world, we were confronted with the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted the regular routine. To ensure that the academic year would be completed without delays, we recruited all possible resources to carry out the program through distance learning, while the students still resided at the university dorms, following the strict guidelines of the Ministry of Health.

The academic year began in October 2019 with a cohort of 22 highly qualified and motivated students from China, Gambia, Guatemala, Israel, Myanmar, Nigeria, Palestinian Authority, Poland, Tanzania, Uganda, Swaziland, Turkey, Uruguay, and the USA. We began the academic year as usual, then in early March, as elsewhere in the



Taking a break from the COVID-19 lockdown and having fun in Carmel Park

We did all we could to support the students and provide for all their needs, especially given that



Graduation ceremony over Zoom, July 26, 2020

they were away from home. Every year, one of the highlights of the Program is the presentation of the final projects, at a poster session. This time, the poster session and the graduation were conducted over Zoom, with the participation of the graduates' families and friends from all over the world, the senior administration of the university, Friends of the

University of Haifa, state ambassadors, members of diplomatic corps, the Israeli Head of the State Protocol, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, and members of the Open Society Foundation, Two Lilies Fund, and Vital Capital Fund. All 22 graduates returned to their home countries, after facing the complicated travel challenges posed by COVID-19.

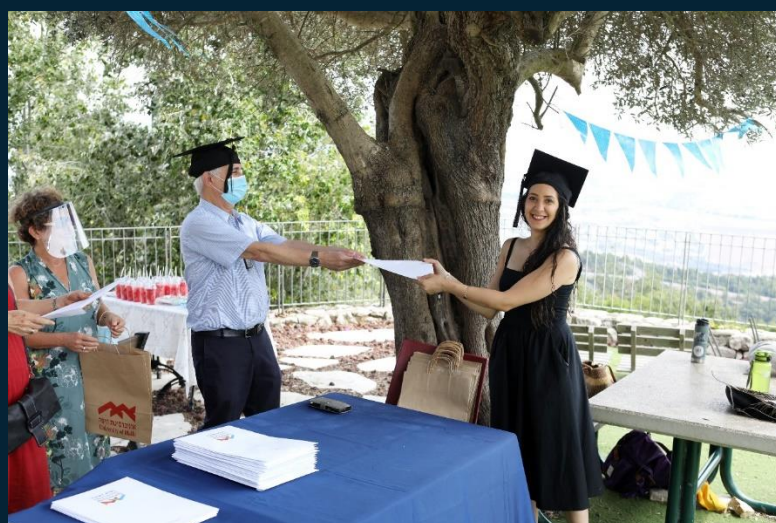
We hope that after the threat of COVID-19 is eliminated worldwide, the Program will resume in its customary format.



A day later after the Zoom graduation,  
farewell in the open space



Yara Sous, a Palestinian graduate from the city of Bethlehem, receiving the MA degree *cum laude*



## Going back home



George Wlateh, graduate from Liberia, stuck in the mud, on his way back home



Grace Nang Awng, Dr. Nan Oo, Elizabeth Zar Kyi Thein, three graduates from Myanmar on their way home

## Where is our journey now?

The journey does not end. As seen throughout this presentation, most of the graduates are already applying developmental knowledge to critical issues that will benefit children and families living in high-risk regions of the world.

The alumni have been "moving and shaking" the education, health, and welfare systems in their countries of origin. The attached [alumni spotlight](https://tinyurl.com/z6nszxm9)<sup>11</sup> allows you to meet three child development ambassadors: Dr. Nana Esi Gaisie, a pediatrician from Ghana, who provides professional services to children with special needs and disabilities; Grace Mwangi, a family social worker and child advocate from Kenya, working with government agencies to transform child protective services for underprivileged children, and serving as Country Director of Give a Child a Family in Kenya; and Sahilu Baye, a psychologist, educator, and advocate for children's rights in Ethiopia. Also, follow this [link](https://thetwoliliesfund.org/)<sup>12</sup> to interviews with members of the first cohort.

All the graduates are passionately and professionally devoted to creating a brighter future for every child in their countries. Many have already had a global impact and made meaningful and sustained contributions to the lives of vulnerable children and families in developing countries.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/z6nszxm9>

<sup>12</sup> <https://thetwoliliesfund.org/>



We would like you to take away four main questions from this presentation:

- ✚ How can the lessons learned here be applied and expanded in interdisciplinary professional development programs across the world? There is a growing need to disseminate interdisciplinary child development evidence-based knowledge and tools to students and professionals who represent a wide range of occupations, who could then exceed the boundaries of their disciplines.
- ✚ How are we to strengthen capacity building in under-resourced countries, and adapt knowledge to the cultural and contextual diversity represented by the graduates from Africa, Asia, Euro-Asia, and South America?
- ✚ How can we secure the sustainability of important, creative, and innovative projects in low-SES countries, especially when the basic infrastructure is insufficient and lacking?
- ✚ How can we foster and deepen ongoing collaborations between academic missions of this type with the missions and activities of local and international stakeholders like UNICEF, World Bank, WHO, various child-supporting foundations, local governments, and the like?

### Partners supporting the program: Acknowledgment and gratitude



The Vice-rector of the University of Haifa, in collaboration with the International School, has allocated several scholarships and covered the cost of a few teaching units. This is part of a newly established grant given by the National Higher Education Council and its Planning and Budgeting Committee to foster internationalization. We are especially thankful to Prof. Gad Barzilai, former Vice-rector, and the staff of the International School, for their continued support and devotion to the Program. Further supplemental support has been provided by the Faculty of Social Sciences, the Offices of the President and the Rector, and Friends of the University of Haifa.



Early Childhood Program (ECP) at the Open Society Foundation (OSF). From its inception, in 1994, to its conclusion, in 2020, the ECP has advanced the rights of young children by supporting impressive initiatives and advocacy activities, by remodeling early childhood development practices and institutions, and by scaling up the power and capacity of civil society groups engaged in improving the wellbeing of young children. Special thanks to Dr. Sarah Klaus, Director of ECP, Ms. Tina Hyder, Deputy-Director of ECP, and Ms. Almaz Ismayilova, Senior Program Specialist at ECP.



Vital Capital Fund is a private equity fund that invests in opportunities that enhance the quality of life of communities in rapidly developing nations, primarily in Africa. The Program enjoys the support of this fund. Mr. Eytan Stibbe, founder of the Fund, jointly with his wife, Mrs. Ora Stibbe, have become dear friends of the program, and their generous donations are deeply appreciated.



The Two Lilies Fund is a donor-advised fund in the USA, whose monies these six years have been given to the Emotional and Professional Development Workshop, alongside support for excellence awards. Its founder, Ms. Jane West, deserves our special gratitude for her endless contribution to the Program in a variety of ways.



The Jacobs Foundation invests in the future of young people to provide better opportunities for positive development and equitable access to education, and to foster their capacity to become socially responsible and productive members of society. Our special thanks to Mr. Fabio Segura, its Co-CEO, for supporting the studies and work of our graduates from the Ivory Coast.



Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV). We have been in extensive contact with MASHAV – the Hebrew acronym for Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation – which is overseen by the Deputy Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. MASHAV has been instrumental in circulating the story of our program at Israeli embassies across the developing world, who then spread the word through various ministries and organizations. MASHAV also provides important logistic support (e.g., connecting us with the ambassadors, assisting with visas, etc.). MASHAV considers our program as an important platform to leverage the "impact for good" of Israel in the developing world. Many of the MASHAV staff deserve our special gratitude. We note especially Former Deputy Head, Ambassador Ilan Floss, who helped us launch the program, facilitated by pilot activity with former Israeli Ambassador, Sharon Bar-Li, in Ghana. Subsequently, the program was welcomed and supported by Ambassador Gil Haskel, Head of MASHAV, presently the Chief of Israeli State Protocol, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.



The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has bilateral agreements with approximately 40 countries, mostly those in transition from developing to developed status. They provide scholarships to students, and a few of our graduates (e.g., from Slovenia and Belarus) were able to join our program with this support. We plan to deepen our contact with potential applicants from these countries, so that they will be able to obtain support through this mechanism.

## Staff

October 2014 - September 2020

### Administrative

Ms. Orly Dubnov, Ms. Vered Mayer, Ms. Lilach Earon, Ms. Adva Bachar, Ms. Shany Weis, Ms. Ella Tavor

### Academic (lecturers, supervisors, and tutors) (alphabetical order)

Dr. Sarit Alkalay, Ms. Inbar Ariav Paraira, Dr. Shlomit Bresler, Mr. Kobi Dahan, Dr. Smadar Dolev, Ms. Noa Egoz Mizrahi, Dr. Ayelet Etzion Carasso, Dr. Deborah Golden, Dr. Nurit Gur-Yaish, Prof. Bat-Sheva Hadad-Mantur, Dr. Benny Hozmi, Dr. Kathy Jacobi, Prof. Tirtsa Joels, Ms. Shikha Kashyap, Ms. Ella Levert-Levitt, Dr. Kinneret Levavi, Dr. Michal Ophir Cohen, Dr. Keren Or-Chen, Ms. Anat Oppenheim, Prof. David Oppenheim, Prof. Avi Sagi-Schwartz, Prof. Anat Scher, Prof. Efrat Sher-Censor, Mr. Ziv Shina, Ms. Michal Slonim, Dr. Efi Stolarski, Prof. Emanuel Tirosh, Dr. Emily Vargas-Baron, Prof. Yair Ziv, Ms. Shira Yerachmiel, Dr. Shira Youval Adler.

The Program has been led by Prof. Avi Sagi-Schwartz (program head) and Prof. Efrat Sher-Censor (academic coordinator) and has been administratively coordinated by Ms. Orly Dubnov.

Photos of six cohorts







## International MA Program in Child Development 2016-2017



## International MA Program in Child Development 2017-2018





## International MA Program in Child Development 2018-2019



## *MA in Child Development Graduation Ceremony*



COVID 19 Class