



Project Proposal

Empowering Israel's Youth At-Risk Through Music and Educational Initiatives

October 2020



Support the Project

The rising number of youth at-risk is one of Israel's most significant social issues. A donation of 1,725 EURO per student, will enable youth at-risk in Israel to participate in music and educational initiatives that help them to develop and thrive.

Israel's Rising Number of Youth At-Risk

A recent report by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) indicates that Israel is one of the countries with the highest poverty rates, especially among children. In fact, one out of every four children in Israel lives below the poverty line. This translates into some 842,000 Israeli children living in poverty. Among this figure, approximately 475,000 children are recognized by Israel's welfare services as "youth at-risk." A large number of these youth characterized as at-risk come from new immigrant and single-parent families and/or families who cannot support their children and have sent them to study at boarding schools.

Since Israel was established, Keren Hayesod-United Israel Appeal, together with The Jewish Agency and the Government of Israel, have been committed to creating and supporting programmes that target Israel's youth at-risk and provide them with positive intervention that will help them to break the cycle of poverty and turn risk into opportunity. As Keren Hayesod marks its Centennial of historic and unwavering support for Israel and the Jewish People, it is more committed than ever to improving the situation among Israel's youth at-risk.

Keren Hayesod's Response to Reducing the Number of Youth At-Risk in Israel

Your generous support is requested to support two key initiatives that help to achieve this goal:

- **The Jerusalem Music Conservatory Hassadna** - dedicated to advancing and enriching the lives of all children and youth with the gift of music education by providing music scholarships as well as comprehensive personal and professional support.
- **Jewish Agency Educational Programmes for Youth At-Risk** - a range of social and educational initiatives that target children and youth at-risk from ages 13 through pre-army preparatory programmes, giving them tools to increase their self-confidence, improve academically and achieve success.

The Jerusalem Music Conservatory Hassadna

For many children and youth at-risk in Jerusalem, music education is an unattainable dream. This is especially true for those growing up in underprivileged families who lack the resources to access high quality enrichment and extra-curricular activities for their children. At the same time, many studies show that playing instruments has a positive impact on a child's academic performance, their self-confidence level as well as their ability to deal with challenges, set and achieve goals and improve concentration. Music also gives children and youth new ways to express their feelings and emotions while enriching their lives.

Located in Jerusalem's German Colony neighbourhood, The Jerusalem Music Conservatory Hassadna serves as a second home to 650 children, aged 3 to 18 from Jerusalem and its surroundings. The Conservatory is guided by the belief that any child, regardless of physical or mental ability, socio-economic level, ethnicity or religious affiliation, should be exposed to, and provided with the opportunity to experience high quality music instruction. Its students represent Jerusalem's full religious, national and economic spectrum, a true reflection of the city's rich and unique human mosaic. A staff of more than 100 musicians welcome students with open arms and fully integrate them into their educational institution, where they are given a unique opportunity for a new and life-changing experience to express themselves through music.

Each new student undergoes an intensive intake process, which aids in creating the best possible program of study. Based on this assessment, an individualized study plan is designed and the most suitable instrument and instructor is determined. Students benefit from individual weekly lessons of 45-90 minutes each, weekly music theory lessons, and participate in chamber ensembles and orchestras. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in musical enrichment activities such as faculty and guest artist concerts, master classes and performing in concerts. Integrating students into orchestra, choir and chamber groups and other musical activities with the rest of the student body reduces a sense of isolation and stigmatization and improves the child's self-confidence.



In order to achieve success, parents and children require constant guidance with the most basic issues such as punctuality, the need to dedicate time for practicing, persistence in the face of challenges and more. The Program Coordinator maintains on-going contact with the students, their music instructors, their school teachers, their parents and other relevant individuals in their lives to monitor their progress.

Each student undergoes a structured review every month with a more comprehensive evaluation taking place at the conclusion of each academic year. Furthermore, as the students advance musically, it is crucial that they are provided with the greatest opportunities for musical advancement that will enable them to reach their potential as promising young musicians. This includes support for participation in excellence programs, music camps, and competitions in Israel and abroad, funding for upgrading and replacing instruments and instrument parts, and additional lessons to prepare for auditions and competitions.



The impact of children's involvement in the Conservatory is indisputable. Program participants progress in their academic studies, demonstrate heightened self-confidence, improved social status at school and are regarded as role models in a number of areas among their peers. For the first time in their lives, these young people feel equal to children coming from far less challenged backgrounds and greatly benefit from the feeling of accomplishment that music education offers. Many students in the program, thanks to their music, are accepted to Jerusalem's best music and arts high schools and excel in their studies. Each year, more children from the program take the matriculation exam in music and perform on stage in leading concert halls in Israel and abroad. And no less significant, the children are blessed with a wonderful and supportive social experience at Hassadna, which for many is their second home. Throughout the year, students from the Conservatory perform in concerts in Jerusalem as well as in Israel's leading concert halls.

Jewish Agency Programmes for Youth At-Risk

Unfortunately, the link between poverty and emotional distress, poor health, risky behaviour, underachievement and lack of social mobility has been widely proven. The more extensive the risk, the less likely a child is to get the support needed to become a normative and contributing citizen. The Jewish Agency is committed to changing this reality and helping Israel's youth at-risk, especially in the periphery, have access to social and educational initiatives that will pave the way to a brighter future.

Your generous support is requested to support three of these key initiatives detailed below.

Youth Futures

Founded in 2006, Youth Futures is a community-based initiative that addresses the long-term needs of “at-risk” children ages 8-14 in a holistic manner. The program provides the children and their families with tools to break the cycle of marginalization and risk by employing a unique mentoring model through which Mentors are assigned to 16 children each, working with each both individually and as a group, alongside schools, families, and social service networks to bring about lasting change. Currently in its 14th year of successful activity nationwide with over 14,000 participants in 36 communities, Youth Futures has positioned itself as a leader in providing a positive intervention model that improves the status of youth at-risk and it has gained the support of the Israeli Government.



Educational Youth Villages

The Jewish Agency's four educational youth villages are home to some 1,000 youth at-risk each from 13-18, who come from severely disadvantaged homes where abuse, delinquency, poverty, and violence are common. Many youth come from first or second-generation immigrant or single-parent families, were orphaned from one or both parents, were accustomed to failure, dropped out of school and/or were rejected by schools. Jewish Agency youth villages are often their last chance to integrate into the Israeli educational system, graduate high school and embark on a path towards success.



Mechinot - Academy For Life (Pre-Army) Academies

The period between high school graduation and enlistment in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is a critical time in the development of Israeli youth. Following a comprehensive study of existing pre-army programs for high school graduates, it is clear that youth from Israel's geographic and socioeconomic periphery are vastly underrepresented in these types of programs as well as in the IDF. In response to this need, The Jewish Agency opened its Ofek Mechinot network in 2011, which comprises a six-month program based on Jewish culture, identity, leadership,

and life skills that combines informal study and meaningful volunteer work. These Mechinot programs are offered at a low cost to participants and are shorter than other pre-army programs, which typically last ten months. Each Ofek Mechina program consists of some 40 Israeli high school graduates who gain tools, skills, and broaden their social networks in order to succeed as contributing citizens of Israeli society.

Personal Stories

Two Keren-Hayesod-supported initiatives on behalf of young adult new immigrants– the Jerusalem Conservatory Hassadna and Jewish Agency Programmes for Youth At-Risk – strive to dramatically reduce the number of children at risk and empower these youth towards a brighter future. There are hundreds more youth at-risk like them who require your support.

Noa (fictitious name), a 17-year-old student, was physically abused as a young child, and as a result was physically abusive to herself and her sisters. She was referred to Ginat Eden, an educational youth village for girls at risk, at which point Noa was addicted to drugs and alcohol. Last year during the process of helping Noa to overcome her addictions, the therapists at Ginat Eden noticed that she was drawn to music and especially to the drum set at the village. They approached the Jerusalem Conservatory in order to give Noa the opportunity to learn drums in a professional framework.

When the musical director first met with Noa, he was amazed by her talent and referred her to the Conservatory's drum teacher – one of Israel's acclaimed drummers, Oren Fried. Oren told us that the journey with Noa has been very challenging and filled with ups and downs, but that she is exceptionally talented and music is in her soul. During the year, Noa progressed tremendously, and their lessons have become an uplifting experience. Oren can see how motivated Noa is to succeed and how much more stable she has become. Nothing is more gratifying than to see children who come from such difficult backgrounds becoming an integral part of the Conservatory community.



Tehila is in the 6th grade and has been participating in Youth Futures for three years. She has four older brothers and one younger sibling. Her mother works in a daycare and her father studies in a Yeshiva. Before joining Youth Futures, Tehila had a lot of anxiety, which caused outbursts of anger and frustration, to the point of inflicting self-harm. Tehila would bang her head against the wall, try to cut herself and was in obvious emotional distress. She would withdraw from any physical contact and believed that everyone around her was looking to hurt her. She has been diagnosed with severe ADHD and was having trouble adjusting herself to her surroundings.

Due to her situation, Tehila was referred to Youth Futures. The programme's staff quickly realised that she has been dealing with multiple emotional gaps in all areas of life – her relationship with her parents was unstable, she did not perform well, in school, despite her great motivation to succeed. Although Tehila was popular socially, she would often use violence. To bridge these gaps and help Tehila overcome her obstacles, Youth Futures staff created a tailor-made programme in consultation with professionals. Over time, Youth Futures allowed Tehila to see herself in a positive light, and with that, her anxieties have subsided, paving the way for her to reach her full potential. Today, Tehila is much more relaxed and communicative. Her process in the programme has allowed her to reach a significant milestone - trusting the adults around her and seeing them as figures who want to help. She also knows how to transcribe her feelings, and her outbursts have entirely stopped. She is more approachable and does not shy away from close contact. In school, Tehila has learned to follow the rules and excel in school. Due to her academic improvements, she was recently awarded a certificate of excellence.



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