

The Impact of The Jewish Agency's Activities

Research and Evaluation of Main Programs

2014 – 2015

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Securing the Jewish Future for Generations

המלך ג'ורג' 48, ת.ד. 92 ירושלים 91000 ישראל | ט. 972 2 620 2222 | jewishagency.org | 48 King George Street P.O.B 92, Jerusalem 91000 Israel | T. 972 2 620 2222 |
הסוכנות היהודית ממומנת על ידי הפדרציות היהודיות - צפון אמריקה, קרן היסוד, קהילות ופדרציות יהודיות עיקריות, הקרן לידידות ירושלים, קרנות ותורמים מישראל ומרחבי העולם.

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I. Introduction

The work of The Jewish Agency has always been driven by an enduring vision, to ensure the future of a connected, committed, global Jewish People with a strong Israel at its center. In 2010, The Jewish Agency reassessed the areas of intervention where it brings added value and expertise to meet challenges that can only be addressed by *Klal Israel* because of the scope of the need and because the issues are the collective responsibility of the Jewish world. Our current strategy is based on the conclusion that the most effective way to realize that vision today is by:

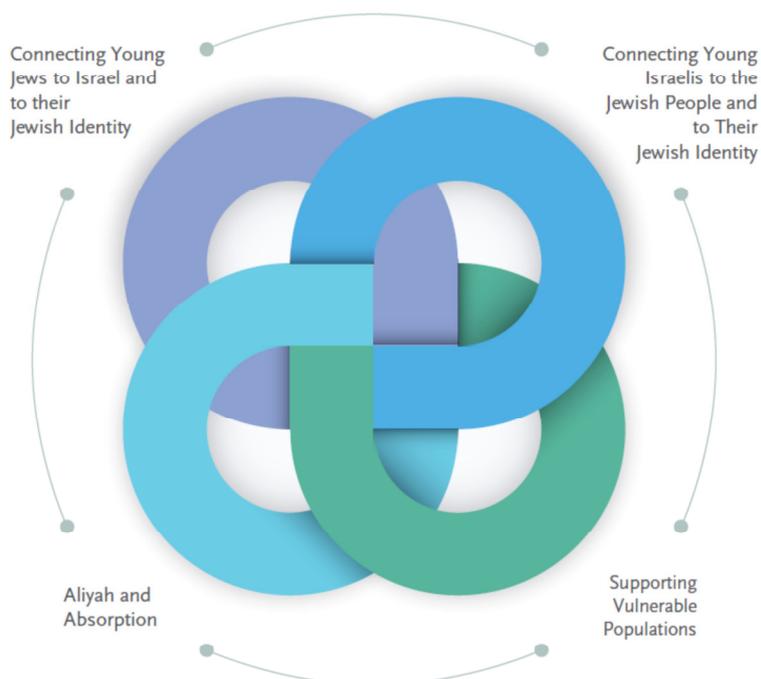
- Connecting young Jews to Israel and to their Jewish identity;
- Connecting young Israelis to the Jewish People and to their Jewish identity;

The intersection between these two areas of impact creates meaningful connections and partnership, and promotes leadership and pluralism.

- Encouraging aliya to Israel as the outcome of a Jewish identity and facilitating the aliya of all Jews who wish to move to Israel, while remaining ready for aliya of rescue;
- Supporting vulnerable populations in Israel.

All these areas of activity contain a focus on strengthening Jewish core values – the relationship between a Jew and her or his people, land, heritage and society-community, and on engaging both young Israelis and young Jews from around the Jewish world.

These four areas of impact are inter-connected and mutually complementary, though for the purposes of this report, each program appears under only one area:

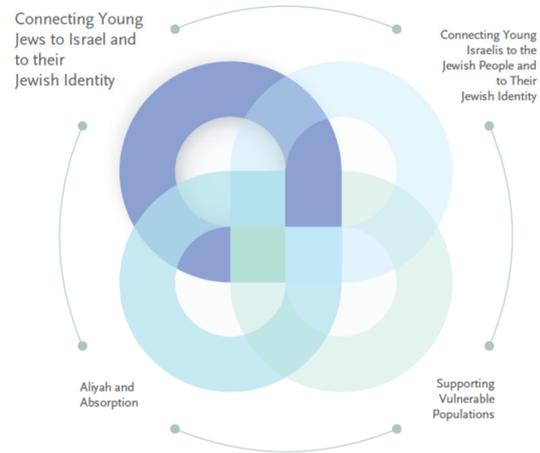


Bringing young Jews together through meaningful personal and community-based connections helps young Israelis connect to the Jewish People and their own Jewish identity, while it also helps connect young Jews from around the world to Israel. Bringing young Jews together for social activism projects is central to support vulnerable populations, while shared activism strengthens the sense of a common commitment. To achieve this we seek to:

- Bring Israel to the Jewish world through developing high-quality programs and content about Israel and provide inspiring Israeli *shlichim* to Jewish educational frameworks around the world; bring the Jewish world to Israel through increasing the number of young people who visit Israel for short and long-term experiential educational visits and increase the variety of these programs;
- Engage young Israelis in social activism in the service of vulnerable populations as a way of strengthening their social commitment and Jewish identity, and introduce into their activism the study of basic Jewish values that underlie social responsibility. Wherever possible, opportunities for social activism bring young Jews and Israelis together to strengthen their sense of a shared language and common values system, and thereby strengthen the Jewish identity of Israelis.

All the initiatives developed to give expression to The Jewish Agency's revised strategic directions are being accompanied in their first years by evaluation, while we also seek to evaluate other programs every few years.

This document brings together the impact and evaluation studies conducted by The Jewish Agency in recent years; the main body of the document provides information on those studies conducted in 2014-2015; the appendix on studies conducted in 2012-2013.



II. Connecting Young Jews to Israel and to their Jewish Identity

1. Onward Israel: encourages engagement with Israel through mid-length programs that combine academic credits, professional internship opportunities, volunteer placements and leadership tracks. The program reaches out to young Jews for whom spending an entire semester or year in Israel is not practicable or not practicable at that stage in their life, and thereby works to expand the number of young Jews who spend extended periods in Israel after high school and birthright. Since its inception in 2012, the program and its impact on the North American market has been evaluated by Rosov Consulting.

2015 Program

The target population for this study, submitted in January 2016, was 973 North American 2015 Onward Israel participants, and 680 individuals who withdrew their Onward Israel application for a 2015 program (non-participants). Participants were asked to complete a survey two weeks prior to the start of their Onward Israel program and two weeks following the completion of their program. The final response rate for the pre-program survey was 89%; 59% for the post-program survey; and 13% for the non-participant survey. 56% (n = 545) of the respondents completed both the pre-program and post-program survey. The largest proportion of respondents who completed both the pre-program and post-program surveys participated in Community-based programs (47%). 12 participants were each interviewed four times over the course of the summer: once before the start of the program, twice during the program, and once after participants returned to the United States (either at the tail-end of the summer or once the fall semester had started). The interview protocols were designed to address further the personal, professional, Jewish-related, and Israel-related components of the program, identifying changes as participants processed their experiences.

The pre and post-program survey instruments included identical items addressing participants' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to Israel, Jewish identity, character development, and academic/professional aspirations. The pre-program instrument also included questions addressing satisfaction from the application process, and the post-program instrument included questions about perceptions and skillsets fostered during the summer experience.

Demographics

There were several shared several demographic similarities with previous cohorts:

- There was a greater percentage of female than male survey respondents (56% compared to 44%);
- Most survey respondents identified as Conservative (28%) or Reform (29%), with 24% defining themselves as "Just Jewish," and 15% as Orthodox;
- 55% of the survey respondents visited Israel previously on a family trip, while 34% participated in a teen travel program and 23% participated in an organized middle school or high school trip. These numbers support Onward Israel's goal to establish itself as a "next rung" Israel experience program, attracting individuals who are interested in following-up and building upon their previous time spent in Israel.

In other areas, the 2015 cohort had demographic differences from previous years:

- There was a greater percentage of individuals from a higher engaged Jewish background (44% high Jewish educational background and 37% medium Jewish educational background, while in previous cohorts, the greatest percentage of respondents had medium levels of prior engagement, and the smallest percentage of respondents were highly engaged). This poses a challenge to Onward Israel: investigate avenues of attracting lesser-engaged applicants, in line with its mission;
- There was a greater percentage of university students (96% compared to 66% in the program's first year);
- Just over two-thirds of participants were Birthright alumni, compared to 38% in the program's first year. This growth suggests a special relationship between the Birthright and Onward Israel experiences, which is also demonstrated in interviews with Onward Israel participants. The optimal form of this relationship needs to be explored further.

Program Impact

Onward Israel impacts on participants across the spectrum of parameters – affect, behavior, cognition. Participants show evidence of returning from the program feeling much more knowledgeable about contemporary Israel and feeling more connected to the country and its people. They feel more knowledgeable too about aspects of their Jewish heritage and about their place in the Jewish people. They express a greater sense of solidarity with other Jews and the Jewish tradition. They also feel more knowledgeable about their fields of professional interest. They return home more realistic about their professional options.

- 83% of respondents to the post-program survey agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them learn more about Israel;
- 71% agreed or strongly agreed that through the program they gained valuable work experience;
- 59% agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them explore their Jewish identity.

Some dramatic differences were observed between participants with varying degrees of Jewish engagement background. Those with fewer years of Jewish educational experiences grew the most following the Onward program in their knowledge of Jewish life and Israel,

and in their Israel- and Jewish-related behaviors. Those who were already engaged in Jewish life, although benefiting from participation in Onward, grew the least in these areas. Importantly, all participants, no matter how Jewishly engaged they were before the program, grew in their knowledge of their professional area of interest and in their attitudes towards Israel, Jewish life and professional development.

While almost all Onward participants share a special interest in getting to know Israel better when they first start the program, their other motivations for taking part in the program are remarkably diverse. These motivations are often closely related to the particular program experience they have selected. Yet no matter how diverse these motivations and how varied their interests when they start the program, by the time they finish, and certainly once they return home, the participants seem to have derived very similar benefits.

This convergence in experience suggests the emergence of an Onward brand; a constancy of practice that cuts across all programs. This is an important development that should be cultivated further. Furthermore, one element in that convergence is what participants derive in Jewish terms from the program. Beyond the Morasha program that specifically offers a “Jewish” discovery experience, most participants did not articulate a special interest in Jewish matters before they started the program or even during the program’s first weeks. However, close to the program’s end and once they returned home, almost all the interviewees revealed that they had been touched Jewishly by the program: they were thinking differently about their place in the global Jewish community, their relationship to Jewish tradition, or how they thought of themselves as young Jews.

Following Onward Israel, participants expected to take part more frequently in several activities related to their Jewish identity and Israel engagement, compared to how often they took part in the year leading up to the program:

- 62% had participated in conversations about Israel, while after the program 70% thought they would to a high or very high degree;
- 51% had followed news about Jews and Jewish communities around the world, while after the program 67% thought they would to a high or very high degree;
- 65% had followed news about Israel, while after the program 85% thought they would to a high or very high degree;
- 66% had participated in Jewish life at home or college, while after the program 74% thought they would to a high or very high degree;
- 59% had celebrated Shabbat with family or friends, while after the program 67% thought they would to a high or very high degree;
- 50% had taken a leadership role in Jewish life at home or college, while after the program 61% thought they would to a high or very high degree;
- 62% had participated in conversations about Israel, while after the program 73% thought they would to a high or very high degree.

Recommendations

- Although Onward Israel has excelled in contributing to participants' growth in their knowledge and understanding of daily life in Israel this knowledge has yet to translate to Israel advocacy activities. Onward Israel may wish to explore the possibility of utilizing evening programs as an opportunity to develop and strengthen advocacy skills, especially given that most of the participants are students who are early in their university careers and likely to become more involved in campus life.
- The large contingent of Birthright alumni among the sample highlights the potential in exploring a connection between Birthright and Onward Israel, particularly since Birthright alumni who participate in Onward Israel were found to have less engaged Jewish backgrounds than other Onward Israel participants. Post-trip Birthright programming can be utilized as a platform for Onward Israel recruitment, with Onward Israel establishing a reputation as a "recommended" post-Birthright Israel experience. Another area to investigate is if there is a market for a "Birthright/Onward" summer combination. A sizable group of those who responded to the post-program survey indicated that they participated in Birthright this past summer. Exploring more systematically who these people are, and what factors are motivating them to choose this programmatic combination for their summer plans will benefit Onward marketing plans.

2014 Program Ten Months On

The target population for this study, submitted in February 2016, consisted of 642 North Americans who participated in an Onward Israel program in the summer of 2014. Most of the participants completed the pre-program survey (92% response rate), a little over half completed the two-week post-program survey (65%), and a little less than half of the participants completed the ten-month post-program survey (40%).

The study examined the longer-term impact of participation in the program on 3 attitudinal and 3 knowledge-based factors:

- Attitudes related to Israel: Connection to Israel and Israelis; sense of pride and familiarity;
- Attitudes related to Judaism and Jewish identity: Sense of belonging to the Jewish people and connection to other Jews; interest in learning more of Jewish heritage, connection to other Jews;
- Attitudes related to personal and professional development: Interest in academic/professional success and contributing positively to society;
- Knowledge related to Israel: Knowledge about day-to-day life and diversity in Israel;
- Knowledge related to Judaism and Jewish identity: Knowledge about Judaism, Jewish heritage, and Jewish communities around the world;
- Knowledge related to personal and professional development: Knowledge about professional field of interest and relevant indicators of success.

There was statistically significant growth when comparing participants' reported levels of knowledge and attitudes in the pre-program survey to the two-week post-program survey, consistent with findings from previous Onward Israel cohorts. There was no statistically

significant change — up or down — when comparing these same factors at the two-week post-program stage and the ten-month post-program stage. The levels of participants' knowledge and attitudes related to Israel and Judaism showed great stability over the ten months since the end of the program; the level of knowledge and attitudes related to personal and professional development in fact increased over time.

While, overall, participants' knowledge about Israel remained stable ten months following the program, lesser-engaged participants—those of low or medium Jewish background—demonstrated a statistically significant decrease in knowledge about Israel over the course of the ten months after the end of the program, while those of high Jewish background maintained the level of knowledge that they had amassed immediately following the program.

Outcomes and Participation in Post-Trip Programming Organized by Onward Israel

The ten-month post-program survey instrument asked participants whether they attended events organized directly by Onward Israel or by program partners during the year following the program. These events included Shabbat dinners, reunions, alumni board events, and homecoming events. Only 35% of respondents indicated that they were aware of such events taking place. In order to assess whether participation in this type of programming was related to long-term program outcomes, the six factor-based outcomes were compared between two groups of alumni: those who were aware of post-programming organized by Onward Israel but *did not attend* and those who were aware of post-programming and *did attend*. Across all six factors, there were no statistical differences in the outcomes based on whether alumni attended post-programming.

It is possible that this finding may result from the comparison groups being too small, considering the limited number of respondents who were aware of post-programming to begin with. This by itself bares important implications. If Onward Israel wishes to emphasize alumni outreach and post-trip programming as part of its organizational goals, then it must consider more effective ways of engaging alumni and creating more-targeted events. At the same time, these findings relating to the relationship between long-term outcomes and participation in post-trip programming may also be interpreted in a way that implies that post-trip programming is not particularly impactful, and that the summer experience is impactful enough by itself. Onward Israel must decide how it chooses to proceed based on its own reflection on these findings.

Increased Involvement in Activities and Events

The pre-program survey instrument asked participants how frequently they attended certain types of events in the year preceding Onward Israel. The ten-month post-program survey instrument asked participants about their attendance in the year following Onward Israel. There were five types of events that participants attended more frequently following their participation in Onward Israel: Israel advocacy events, Jewish professional networking events, networking events unrelated to the Jewish community, Jewish cultural events, and Israel cultural events. Activities that did not see more involvement included Jewish social events, Jewish religious activities, Jewish learning events, and social justice events.

Intention and Actuality

The two-week post-program survey instrument included several questions inquiring whether participants' intended in the upcoming year, among others, to organize events, take certain courses, and visit Israel again. The ten-month post-program survey instrument then followed-up by asking participants whether they actually fulfilled their intentions. Participants demonstrated slippage in a few areas, as is somewhat expected.

- Initiating, Organizing, or Leading Events: approximately half (or in some cases, less than half) of participants indicated that they planned to initiate, organize, or lead Jewishly-related, Israel-related, or professionally-related events in the year following Onward Israel. For each of these types of events, a smaller percentage of participants actually did so. Interestingly, a greater percentage of alumni initiated, organized, or led a Jewish religious service than those who originally intended to. Among the nature of these events:
 - ✓ 49% declared their intention to initiate, organize or lead an Israel advocacy event, but 32% reported that they had actually done so;
 - ✓ 46% declared their intention to initiate, organize or lead a Jewish social justice/volunteering event, but 31% reported that they had actually done so;
 - ✓ 54% declared their intention to initiate, organize or lead a Jewish social event, but 48% reported that they had actually done so.
- Taking Courses: approximately one quarter of participants indicated that they planned to take courses in Islamic and Middle Eastern studies, Hebrew language studies, and Jewish studies in the year following Onward Israel; the ten-month post-program survey illustrated that far fewer, some 13-16%, did so.
- Visiting Israel Again: Of those who completed both the two-week and 10-month post-program surveys, 37% of respondents indicated that they planned to visit Israel within the year following their participation in Onward Israel. In actuality, 19% of respondents indeed visited Israel that year. In other words, approximately half of those who intended to return to Israel within the next year did so.

2. Masa Israel Journey: Retrospective Study of Alumni 2005 –

2014: Between 2005-2014 some 50,000 young Jews spent extended periods of time in Israel on a Masa Israel Journey program. Data for the analysis conducted by Rosov Consulting and reported on in November 2015, come from two sources: 5,732 individuals on the Masa contact list who responded to an on-line survey (representing 12% of those to whom the survey was sent); and 45 individuals who participated either in focus groups or in one-on-one interviews.

The mix of participants in this study corresponds well to the general mix of participants in Masa programs.

- 41% of survey respondents participated in programs at yeshivot and religious seminaries, or in youth group programs;
- 36% of survey respondents participated in career development programs which include academic programs, internships, professional development, leadership, and

other programs for post-college participants interested in learning, working, or volunteering in Israel;

- 8% of survey respondents participated in programs intended for emerging market countries, currently France and FSU, whose participants who have a strong desire to make, or consider making, aliya.

A further 15% of survey respondents did not participate in any program, but at some point inquired about a Masa program. These individuals constitute a valuable comparison group.

General Impact: a Masa Israel experience is related to significantly enhanced levels of Jewish engagement, Israel engagement and leadership in the Jewish community. Jewish attitudinal and behavioral expressions among Masa alumni, as well as expressions of Israel engagement, are significantly greater than those exhibited by comparison groups of individuals who inquired about going on a Masa program and then did not. These differences are generally stable no matter how long it has been since individuals participated in a Masa program, following a small decline in intensity about a year after the end of the program.

Marriage and Friendship: Participation in Masa Israel programs is related to a decrease in rates of intermarriage. When controlling for age and for whether respondents' parents are Jewish, Masa participants are 37% less likely to marry non-Jewish partners. Looking specifically at alumni of Group B (career development) programs with low and medium Jewish background, only 18% of those who are married indicated that their partner is not Jewish. By contrast, as many as 42% of married non-participants with the same Jewish education background have a partner who is not Jewish.

These personal choices seem related to the nurture of social networks and meaningful peer groups during time in Israel. These dynamics are very much part of the collateral effect of participating in a Masa program. While only a quarter (26%) of non-Masa participants met "some," "most" or "all" of their closest friends in Israel on a short-term program in Israel, nearly three-quarters (72%) of Masa alumni indicated that "some," "most" or "all" of their closest friends were from their Masa experience. This is consistent with interview and focus group data which reveal how after their return home alumni seek out like-minded peers who have participated in similar life experiences.

Jewish Life Behaviors and Attitudes: Compared to non-participants, almost twice as many Masa alumni participate frequently (34% compared with 18%) in a set of Jewish behaviors that includes celebrating holidays such as Rosh Hashanah or Passover, giving money to Israel and Jewish related causes, and participating in Shabbat dinners. Following a small dip, these patterns do not fade the longer the period of time after alumni return home. The Jewish behaviors of Masa alumni are stable more than four years after completing a program, a pattern that holds for Masa alumni as a whole, and especially among participants in yeshiva, youth group and career development programs.

The duration of the Masa experience relates to the frequency of post-program Jewish life behaviors. Those who attended longer programs (8 months or more) reported higher rates of engagement in Jewish life behaviors compared to those who went on short programs (4 or 5 months long). The lowest rate of engagement in such behaviors was reported by non-participants, most of whom went on short programs such as Birthright.

Alumni attitudes towards being Jewish: While asking about attitudes is less testing than asking about behaviors, such questions make it possible to compare Masa alumni with young adults who have participated in other studies that have been interested in exploring Jewish attitudes and outlooks. Responding to the question, “How important is being Jewish in your life?” 25% of participants in the 2014 Pew study of Jewish Americans, between ages 18-30 who do not identify as Orthodox, thought that being Jewish is very important. By comparison, 57% of non-Orthodox Masa alumni indicated that being Jewish is “very important” to them. This is also significantly higher than those who did not go on Masa programs at all but who did go on other short-term programs to Israel (39%).

Connection to Israel and Israelis: Time spent on Masa is consistently related to higher expressions of emotional connection to Israel and to behavioral expressions of connection and interest following one’s return, including return visits and, for some, the decision to make aliya.

There is a significant difference between Masa alumni and their 18-30 year old peers in the Pew dataset in response to the Pew survey question: “How emotionally attached are you to Israel?” Non-Orthodox Masa alumni are six times more likely to say that they are “very attached to Israel” than are Pew respondents who have never been to Israel, and three times more likely to say they are “very attached to Israel” than peers in the Pew dataset who may have been to Israel. When comparing Masa and non-participants on this measure, the differences are greatest among those identified as having low or medium Jewish educational backgrounds: among those with low backgrounds, 52% compared to 36% say they are very attached to Israel, and among those with medium backgrounds, 53% compared to 35%.

Masa alumni were twice as likely as non-participants to be connected to Israel behaviorally (27% compared with 12%). These differences were greatest among those identified as having the least intense Jewish backgrounds (20% compared to 11% among those with low backgrounds, and 28% compared to 6% among those with medium backgrounds).

There were no significant differences between the reported behaviors of those who had participated in different types of Masa programs: the intensified behavioral connection to Israel of Masa alumni was consistent across all types of Masa programs.

Aliya: On-Ramp and Springboard: In many ways, the ultimate expression of connecting to Israel is making a decision to move there. Some – especially from FSU and France – sign up for Masa programs already knowing that they plan to make aliya. As explained in interviews, they see Masa as providing an easily accessible on-ramp to life in Israel; it

provides a chance to learn the language and perhaps learn a profession. Others – mainly from North America – did not plan on making such a move before they started the program. For them, the experience is less an on-ramp and more a springboard enabling them to make an unexpected leap.

Twice the percentage of North American Masa alumni (including orthodox respondents) have made aliya than did North Americans who were only on short-term programs in Israel (22% vs. 11%). The rates of aliya among alumni from France and the FSU are much higher. Among alumni from the FSU they have consistently been about 50% for the last four years; for those from France, there has been a steady increase over the same period, rising from 39% to 53%.

Jewish Leadership: both quantitative and qualitative data indicate how the experience in Israel whets an appetite to share with others what one has experienced and learned.

When comparing Masa participants with non-participants, alumni are twice as likely (14% vs. 7%) to report participating to a great degree in leadership activities upon returning from Israel (5.5 or higher, on a scale of 1 to 7). This pattern is repeated across a series of specific activities.

- Alumni volunteer with an Israel advocacy group almost three times more than do non-Masa participants;
- Alumni are twice as likely to donate money to Israel or Jewish-related causes than non-Masa participants;
- Alumni take a leadership role in Israel-oriented events almost three times more often than non-Masa participants;
- Alumni are 43% more likely to take a leadership role in Jewish life at home or at university.

Two features of this pattern are worth noting: it is only a minority of alumni who act in this way; between one-in-ten and one-in-five; this phenomenon is concentrated among alumni of yeshiva, youth group and career development programs. This second finding may reflect the fact that a higher proportion of alumni from these programs return to their own countries rather than stay in Israel. Perhaps those who make aliya are simply getting on with the business of living in Israel rather than acting as leaders.

Interviews reveal that while a small proportion of alumni purposefully use time on Masa to develop their capacity to serve as leaders in their communities when they return home, many act as leaders on their return out of a sense that they have something to share from their time in Israel, though acting in this way was not something for which they prepared.

Space and Time: Enablers of Change: Qualitative data shed light on how many of these outcomes are produced. They underline the special contribution of an extended period of time in Israel within frameworks that allow individuals space and time to encounter Israel for themselves. Alumni have had a chance to learn things about Israel that disappoint some and inspire others, and to experiment with ways of being Jewish that they had not

previously considered. Interviewees and survey respondents repeatedly come back to these hallmarks of the Masa experience as accounting for how they think and act today. These program features are what typically distinguish longer-term Masa programs from even the most effective short-term programs in Israel.

Adding a further layer of texture, the qualitative data surface an intriguing dynamic that continues *after* people return home from their Masa experience. In a kind of nesting behavior, many alumni, it seems, seek out others like themselves, people with whom they have much in common and who have been formed by similar kinds of powerful experiences. These dynamics play a large part in sustaining outcomes set in motion while they are still in Israel and well after their return home.

A great many participants perceive their time in Israel as enabling them to see and understand things about Israel of which they were only dimly aware before they came to the country. Spending four months or more in Israel, and seeing it much more clearly than before, is a precursor to consummating commitment and engagement with Israel and with Jewish life.

3. The Israel-Engaged in the Toronto Jewish Community: As a critical first stage in developing approaches to Israel engagement within Diaspora communities and models for community-wide Israel engagement programs, research within the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, funded jointly by the Federation and The Jewish Agency, and conducted by Rosov Consulting, sought to:

1. Identify and measure how diverse members of Toronto's Jewish communities think, feel and act in relation to Israel;
2. Determine the extent to which connections to and relationships with Israel are related to programmatic interventions, especially those the Federation supports;
3. Capture the place of Israel in Jewish communal life, and explore whether Israel continues to play a unifying role for the community, and whether the relationship of community members to Israel is influenced by anti-Israel rhetoric.

With this research the Toronto federation is the first organized Jewish community in North America to undertake a broad and systematic look at Israel in the lives of its members - both adults and young adults. The report was submitted in October 2015.

This study takes place at a time when there is a great deal of debate about whether Diaspora Jews today, especially younger ones, feel closer and connected to or more distant and alienated from Israel than those even less than a decade ago. Some argue that a closer connection to Israel has been inspired by efforts such as Birthright Israel or prompted by a reaction to the increasing prevalence of anti-Zionism and antisemitism on campus. Others argue that many Jews coming of age today feel alienated by the policies of the Israeli government and by the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Some argue that detachment may be a consequence of rising rates of intermarriage.

While this study sheds little light on those who are not interested enough in Israel either to complete a survey or to participate in a focus group (in other words, those who would be characterized as “distant” from Israel), it does afford an opportunity to understand the role of Israel in the lives of those Toronto Jews who are in some way connected to Israel and to Israelis through the development of a set of empirically rounded expressions of Israel engagement and the identification of their specific component parts.

The report is based on data from 1,554 people who responded to a survey sent out by 21 community organizations to all those on their contact lists, and 98 people who participated in one of 19 focus groups. The data enable community planners and educators to understand the distinct and different ways in which various age cohorts and demographic groups engage with Israel, and make visible the outcomes produced by educational and communal interventions, such as trips to Israel (especially when experienced multiple times), summer camps, Jewish day schools, and relationships with shlichim.

The research did not expect to determine fully the extent to which Toronto Jews over the age of 16 are engaged with Israel, but did aim to uncover the texture of relationships with Israel for a great many of them, and to explore what experiences form, extend and intensify these relationships.

Conceptualizing Israel Engagement

The CONTENT of Israel engagement was conceived as made up of three broad concerns:

- *Social/Civic* - forming ongoing relationships and commitments to Israelis and Israel as ends in themselves or as public activities motivated by a sense of duty regardless of the outcomes;
- *Political* - desiring to sustain or change the shared values, practices, and policies that shape collective life in Israel or in relation to it among Diaspora communities;
- *Symbolic* - seeing a link to Israel as a means to create a sense of Jewish transcendence and a connection to some Jewish entity larger than oneself.

Engagement with these three different types of content was seen as taking four forms.

- *Cognition/Knowledge* – intellectual expressions – reading, study and the acquisition of knowledge about Israel;
- *Affect* – emotional expressions such as feeling at home in or being proud of Israel;
- *Connection* – a particular feeling of being related in some way to Israel and Israelis;
- *Behavior/Commitment* – participation, involvement and leadership in action-oriented investments concerned with Israel.

Expressions of Israel Engagement

Nine broad but distinct expressions of Israel engagement were identified, each is a composite of specific instances of Israel engagement.

- **Knowledge**
 1. **Knowledge about Israel** — about day to day life in Israel and contemporary Israeli culture, the place of Israel in Jewish history, the current political situation in Israel and the Israel-Palestinian conflict.
- **Attitude/Emotion**
 2. **Advocacy** — a sense of oneself as an ambassador for Israel and being able to articulate to others what Israel means.
 3. **Political Concern** — strong feelings about the political situation in Israel (however that is understood by the individual respondent).
- **Connection**
 4. **Connection to Israel** — a feeling of being at home at Israel and of not being distant from it.
 5. **Connection to Israel when Israel is at war** — a feeling of being more connected to Israel at times of crisis.
- **Behaviors**
 6. **Personal Cultural Involvement** — engagement through self-directed and personal activities such as reading books by Israeli authors and following Israeli news media, watching Israeli movies or TV shows, talking with others about Israel, and attending Israeli cultural events and lectures.
 7. **Communal Involvement** — engagement through participating in community events and legacy programs that demonstrate support for Israel and through donating to causes that support Israel and Israelis.
 8. **Involved on Social Media** — engagement through both following and posting on social media.
 9. **Activity when Israel is at War** — greater involvement at times of crisis though participating in events or demonstrations that support Israel, donating more to causes in Israel, and posting more actively on social media than would otherwise be the case.

Feedback from community professionals indicates that four of these broad expressions are especially useful in capturing the main dimensions of Israel engagement that a plurality of community programs seek to nurture:

- **Knowledge about Israel**
- **Connection to Israel**
- **Personal Cultural Involvement**
- **Communal Involvement**

These succinctly convey the cognitive and emotional content of what “being engaged with Israel” means in Toronto, and its distinct behavioral expression. These expressions may seem intuitive; however the distinction between personal and communal involvement is an important new insight that adds nuance to previous conceptions of engagement.

Age Cohorts: Surprising Findings about the Under-30s

▪ How They Engage with Israel

It is widely assumed that young adults under the age of thirty are more detached from Israel than those older than them. Scholars basically disagree about whether this so-called “distancing” is an age-related phase (not specifically related to Israel but more a consequence of how millennials engage in a communal life generally) or a disquieting generational change related to a widening gap in the values of different generations; they do not generally disagree about the existence of “distancing.” Among survey respondents, adults under the age of 30 were indeed less likely to participate in forms of programming through which many community members have traditionally engaged with Israel.

Unexpectedly, the under-30 age-cohort is actually the most active when engaging in personally-initiated Israel-related activities, especially of a cultural sort, such as watching Israeli movies or talking about Israel with friends. As members of this age-cohort explained in focus groups, they make extensive use of social media (Facebook, in particular) to explore and respond to conversation about Israel, at times of their own choosing. While in public terms they seem disengaged from Israel, that disengagement is a reflection more of their discomfort with ritualized communal involvement or the lack of pluralism often exhibited at communal events. When they can initiate or determine the terms of involvement, they do get involved more intensively than those who are older than them.

The most decisive difference between the age cohorts is the forms by which they engage with Israel, and less their attitudinal orientation to Israel. This helps explain why more than any other cohort, the 21-30 and 31-40 year-olds report that when Israel is at war, they become more behaviorally active.

▪ What They Think of Israel

Another widespread assumption about the under-30 age cohort is that having experienced some of the most abrasive forms of anti-Zionist and antisemitic activism in recent years on university campuses, these young people have become alienated from traditional Zionist narratives.

This was a thesis probed by asking survey respondents to react to a series of nine statements that depicted “images of Israel,” such as “Israel is the homeland of the Jewish people” or “Israel is a place where Arabs are treated unfairly.”

Unexpectedly, it was found that age cohorts differ significantly only in respect to one particular image: their view of Israel as a “place to be safe from antisemitism.”

These findings suggest that the most decisive differences between the age cohorts are in the forms by which they engage with Israel, less so in their attitudinal orientation to Israel.

▪ Implications

The findings suggest that the community does not need fundamentally to overhaul the narratives by which it makes a case for engaging with Israel, although it seems that employing Holocaust-related imagery is **not** resonant for younger cohorts. Moreover, it

does seem as if the corrosive impact of campus anti-Zionism on students' engagement with and perception of Israel might be overstated. The main challenge for the community, it seems, is to develop media (social, in-person and user-initiated) that appeal to younger age cohorts and that can provide outlets through which they can connect with Israel.

Denominations

▪ How They Engage with Israel

The responses of Orthodox/Modern Orthodox survey respondents (17% of the sample) are consistent with previous studies of North American Jewry. This group is more emotionally connected to Israel, and its connection translates into higher rates of involvement in community programming as well as into self-directed personal engagement with Israel. More unexpected are the ways in which those who identify themselves as Secular express their engagement with Israel. Their levels of personally-driven engagement with Israel are similar to those of the Modern Orthodox, and are significantly higher than all other denominational groups, but their engagement with community events is significantly lower than other groups. Their cognitive engagement with Israel is similar to the Orthodox/Modern Orthodox group and significantly higher than all other groups, and they express the greatest interest in political matters in Israel.

▪ What They Think of Israel

In terms of their images of Israel, the Orthodox and the Secular are almost polar opposites of one another, while both groups again differ from other denominations. A higher proportion of the Orthodox strongly view Israel as the Homeland of the Jewish People (97%); a much smaller proportion (65%) of the Secular do so. By contrast, a very small proportion of the Orthodox (14%) think of Israel as a place where Arabs are treated unfairly; much higher proportion of the Secular (31%) do so.

▪ Implications

The secular are present in equal proportion across all age cohorts and make up between 10% and 15% of the sample. All in all, these appear to be people who connect with Israel independently to high levels. From focus groups it emerged that Israel provides an important part of what connects them to Jewish life. And yet, whatever their age, they do not find meaning in mainstream community events. They have the highest levels of cultural engagement with Israel but the lowest rates of communal engagement. This group is also the most concerned about the political situation in Israel. It is worth considering whether different or new forms of community programming might engage this minority population.

Educational and Communal Interventions

▪ Trips to Israel

Because so many participants in the study, 96%, had visited Israel at least once (a noteworthy marker of the extent of Israel engagement in the Toronto community), and 51% of them within a mediated experience (organized program), it was not possible to assess Israel engagement among those who had never visited the country compared with those who had been to Israel. Instead, the research focused specifically on those aged 40 or younger, 90% of whom had visited Israel at least once within the framework of a mediated

experience, a program shaped by an educational vision or communal agenda and not only as part of private/personal or business trip.

The data are unambiguous: the more often a person visits Israel the more actively engaged they are with it. This is something of a virtuous circle: frequent visits contribute to more intense engagement which in turn results in further visits. After going on a second trip, it seems as if the virtuous circle is truly set in motion.

- **Birthright**

Birthright has an additive effect but is not a substitute for a mix of experiences in Israel. In other words, those who went on Birthright as well as on other additional mediated trips reported higher levels of engagement in relation to some expressions of Israel engagement than those who went on other mediated trips but not on Birthright as well. However, those who **only** went on Birthright, and on no additional trips, consistently displayed lower levels of engagement than those who went only on other mediated trips.

- **Implications**

Birthright is not a substitute for other programs. It sets in motion a cycle of more intensive engagement with Israel that is catalyzed by further visits to the country. In that respect the program should be marketed and conceived as a gateway rather than a terminus reached when one arrives at a certain age.

- **March of the Living**

Toronto is unusual on account of the high number of young people who participate in March of the Living. There is a significantly higher measure across all four major expressions of engagement with Israel among those who participated at some point in the program than those who had not participated in any other mediated trip to Israel.

- **ShinShinim and Shlichim**

The connection with shlichim is associated with higher levels of engagement with Israel across all four expressions of engagement. It could be that the connection to Israelis is not what *causes* the higher Israel engagement scores but is rather its *result*, meaning that people who are more engaged with Israel in general choose to bond with shlichim and Israelis who live in Toronto. However, it is striking that this association still holds even for those who do not otherwise have Israeli friends. Without any other local social network with Israelis, these people displayed higher levels of Israel engagement.

- **Implications**

It seems that relationships with ShinShinim may not be “transformative” in the way that trips to Israel are experienced, but they may constitute a more intimate and continuous part of people’s lives. For these reasons it is worth exploring how to extend the program’s “touch” to additional educational frameworks.

- **The Lasting Effects of Specific Forms of Immersive Jewish Education – and the Apparently Limited Impact of Summer Camp**

Trips to Israel and the presence of shlichim in the community are examples of “interventions” specifically geared towards enhancing engagement with Israel; other Jewish educational experiences also enhance engagement with Israel even if such an outcome is not their primary intent.

Day schools and youth groups are related to higher levels of cognitive and emotional expressions of Israel engagement among those who attend just one or the other; camp is not. When it comes to behaviors, however, camp does not seem to be associated with less intense outcomes.

- **Implications**

The positive impact of day school education and youth movements is not surprising. These immersive environments are often suffused with a strong Zionist ethos that seems positively to impact engagement with Israel. The weaker impact of camp does however call for further investigation. Of these three types of educational experiences this is probably the least orientated around an Israel-centric vision, and that is apparently reflected in the data. These findings, while tentative, suggest that it will be worthwhile exploring how camps can become more effective vehicles for enhancing Israel engagement.

4. Financial Mapping of Funding Sources for Israel Experience

Trips for North American Youth and Young Adults: In 2014, Rosov Consulting conducted an examination of the financial resources dedicated by the North American Jewish community to educational experiential visits to Israel for youth and young adults – aged 14-adults – from 10-day trips to year-long programs.

Total Amount Invested and Capacity to Invest

Collectively, Jewish communal organizations in North America expend between **approximately \$85,875,000 - \$88,775,000** on Israel trips for youth and young adults annually. The estimated breakdown of total expenditures in North America is:

- *National organizations*, including youth movements, denominational movements, foundations, fellowships, and college movements: approximately \$66,625,000 – \$67,025,000, including \$60,000,000 for Birthright Israel.
- *Federations*: approximately \$12,500,000 on Israel trips excluding Birthright trips.
- Day schools: approximately \$1,500,000 - \$2,500,000.
- Camps: approximately \$750,000 - \$1,250,000.
- Synagogues (excluding national denominational movements): between approximately \$4,500,000 - \$5,500,000.

Fees Charged to Participants

Fees cover the majority of the costs for day school and camp trips; therefore, these organizations do not expend significant amounts of money on Israel trips themselves. Day

schools appear to contribute a higher amount to help subsidize the cost of their own trips than do camps.

Challenge of the High Costs

Across the board, all Jewish communal organizations seem to grapple with the high costs of trips that are not Birthright trips and encourage interested youth to “find” money from various sources. As such, federations have the most funding capacity and appear to be the overall source of funding for Israel trips for youth and young adults. However, federations, too, struggle to cover the high cost of trips, which appear to have decreased demand for trips other than Birthright.

Overall Trip Priorities

There appear to be no clear trends in trip priorities across organizations. Priorities vary among types of institutions and denominational movements. For example, day schools may vary in their educational philosophy and thus organize a trip around their specific educational needs and trip duration preferences. In addition, young people affiliated with particular denominations tend to go on particular types of trips that vary in trip duration and thematic focus (i.e. NFTY, BBYO, USY Israel Pilgrimage, OU Jewish Journeys, etc).

Camps and day schools appear to participate in the market by running their own trips as opposed to funding other trips, while the majority of federation and synagogue funds are spent on trips that are not organization-run. This indicates that camps and day schools are much more likely to have specific types of trips and/or trip criteria than federations and synagogues.

Funding Sources

Organizations that provide scholarships and/or subsidies for Israel trips obtain funds from different sources. Day schools tend to rely on student fees, private donors, and student fundraising, while camp trips are funded primarily through participant fees and to a very limited extent foundation grants. The majority of funds expended by synagogues originate in discretionary funds, and federation funding comes from various buckets: annual campaign funds, private donors, private foundations, and endowments.

Federations are involved with Jewish communal organizations (camps, day schools, and synagogues) to the extent that some federations may help fund day school trips or provide scholarships to Jewish campers, which may potentially be used for camp-run Israel trips. Federations that offer savings programs work more closely with synagogues to provide matching contributions for families to save money for teen and young adult Israel trips.

Strategic Implications – Influencing the Market

Because the cost of trips to Israel has increased over the years, there appears to be room in the market for additional funding to subsidize trips across Jewish communal organizations. If trips can be significantly subsidized and marketed well, demand is likely to increase.

Otherwise, it appears that youth and young adults who are not loyal to a particular camp or do not participate in a day school trip will tend to wait to go on a free Birthright trip. In

addition, federations may be catering to their own community needs, a reflection of why there appear to be few trends in the “other trips” category and why communities would fund different areas of focus if they received increased funding for Israel trips for youth and young adults.

Observations regarding the market and The Jewish Agency’s potential influence:

1. Families interested in participating in federation savings programs but are either deterred from enrolling in the program or withdraw their participation because the lure of a free Birthright trip is too high are a target demographic that may be influenced to go to Israel on more heavily subsidized non-Birthright Israel trips.
2. Young people who are not affiliated with a day school constitute a segment of the market that could be reached. Day school students appear to get funding from their institution and/or private sources, and may be more likely to be motivated to go on an Israel trip at a younger age if trips are part of the school institutional culture.
3. While federations, in general, appear to “find” money or have enough allocated to meet demand, federations reported that they would do more with additional money, indicating that more young people could be reached.
4. Focus on communities in the U.S. where funding strategies may vary more significantly than in Canadian communities.
5. As large communities have funding capacity several times that of large-intermediate, intermediate, and small communities, more emphasis on mid-sized communities may have a greater impact.
6. The Northeast communities appear to spend the most on Israel trips (approximately \$7.4 million), followed by the West (approximately \$4.3 million). This may reflect Jewish population density as well as strong connections to Israel, and, as such, funding directed toward regions without existing strong connections (potentially reflected by annual expenditures) may be more impactful.
7. Trips lasting 10 days to one month are the most funded, and, as such, may reflect demand for trips of this length for high school and post-college age groups that are not eligible for Birthright trips.
8. While shorter trips may be more in demand than longer trips overall, it seems that there is room for increased post-trip follow up and programming that may lead to subsequent trips to Israel in later years.
9. While savings programs appear to be on the decline, additional funding from federations and/or synagogues may encourage participation if the trip can be heavily subsidized.
10. Because each community serves different demographics with different market preferences, it may be difficult to find a “magic bullet” that would shift funding in a particular direction. However, reducing costs for Israel trips catering to youth and young adults may increase trip participation overall.

5. Israel Fellows Program: Concern regarding support for Israel on North American campuses led to the development of the Israel Fellows Program (IFP). The IFP, a collaboration of Hillel: the Foundation for Jewish Campus Life (Hillel) and the Jewish Agency for Israel (The Jewish Agency), brings Israeli young adults to American college campuses to work on Israel education, advocacy, and engagement. The IFP was launched in 2003 on six American campuses. In the 2012-13 academic year, 56 Fellows served 70 North American colleges and universities. The Jewish Agency and Hillel are working to develop systematic data that can be used as a basis for strategizing how best to extend the reach and impact of the program.

Functioning of the Israel Fellows

In the second stage of the evaluation, Brandeis evaluated the functioning of the Israel Fellows through a survey of Executive Directors of Hillel organizations on American college campuses. They were asked questions about Israel programming and activities, the overall political atmosphere, and anti-Israel activities on campuses during the 2013-2014 academic year, the role and importance of their Israel fellow in promoting Israel engagement and in mobilizing students and other elements of the campus to address anti-Israel campaigns. The response rate was 74%; 49% came from campuses with an Israel Fellow. The overwhelming majority of the directors indicated that their Israel Fellow was very important to Taglit-Birthright Israel recruitment, orientation, reunions and follow up as well as to showing Israeli films, celebrations of Israeli holidays, café Ivrit Hebrew sessions, tabling, and organizing lectures and panels about Israel.

When asked how their Israel programming would be affected if they did not have a Fellow, the overwhelming majority of respondents expressed strong endorsement of the value of this role and concern that without an Israel Fellow they would be severely hampered or unable to provide Israel programming. Many noted that without their Fellow they would not have the staff to devote to Israel programming.

The perceptions of Hillel executives regarding the value of Israel Fellows are also supported by comparison of Israel programming on those campuses that do and do not have a Fellow. In particular, activities related to Taglit-Birthright Israel recruitment, reunion, and follow-up, as well as extra-curricular courses or lectures on topics related to Israel are significantly more frequent on campuses where a Fellow is present.

In terms of their knowledge of and focus on Israel, Fellows represent a valuable resource to campus Hillels that cannot easily be replaced with existing staff. The centrality of Fellows for Israel programming is supported by the finding that one-quarter (24%) of campuses that do not have a Fellow indicate that they have no staff whose portfolio focuses on Israel programming. The knowledge of Israel that Fellows bring to their work is also a unique resource in most Hillels. The majority of Hillel executives, whether they did or did not have a Fellow, felt that their staff had only modest confidence in their knowledge of Israel. Less than one-third felt that their staff overall were very confident in their knowledge of Israeli politics, social issues, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, arts and culture and history. Although

some noted that more senior staff were more knowledgeable, they also acknowledged that more junior staff, those that are in most close contact with students, are often far less confident in their comprehensive knowledge of Israel.

In the current political climate, Hillel organizations are responsible not only for the positive tasks of Israel education and engagement but also with combating anti-Israel activities and campaigns on campus. The survey asked respondents to indicate the frequency of a variety of anti-Israel activities that might have taken place on their campus in the prior year. Sixty percent of campuses experienced some form of pro-Palestinian or anti-Israeli programming on campus including 6 “apartheid” walls, and Palestinian solidarity weeks. One-third (31%) of campuses reported that at least one form of BDS campaign took place on their campus including boycott, divestiture and sanctions campaigns.

The findings reported in this memo paint a very positive preliminary portrait of the contributions made by Israel Fellows to Israel programming on American college campuses. However, there are several caveats to be kept in mind in interpreting these findings and they should not be taken to represent a summative evaluation of the Israel Fellows program. The first caution is that the survey on which they are based is a retrospective look at campus activity and cannot substitute for a pre-post study of campus outcomes. It is also possible that pre-existing differences between those campuses that do and do not have a Fellow account for some portion of the observed differences. That being said, the findings of this survey do suggest that Fellows are seen as central players in all aspects of programming related to Israel, in driving the Taglit-Birthright Israel agenda and in garnering support from diverse elements of the campus in the face of anti-Israel activity.

6. Summer Camps in the FSU: In 1991, The Jewish Agency ran its first camps in the FSU. In recent years, the camps have annually reached out to some 6,000 young Jews aged 11-25, through 700 local and some 150 specially-trained Israeli counselors. Research worldwide has clearly shown that camps are a leading intervention model to ignite Jewish identity at a critical stage in the life of young Jews, and indeed, since our early days in the field nearly two decades ago, camps have become a central feature of our outreach to the younger generation of FSU Jews. The camps have, since their inception, impacted on approximately 150,000 young Jews. The importance of the camps lies on two levels – providing transformative Jewish experiences for children and youth, and fostering Jewish leadership.

An impact study was conducted on four camps in summer 2014 by Zofnat Institute for Organizational Consulting, Development and Research.

- Moscow, 138 participants aged 14-17;
- Kiev, 110 participants aged 14-17;
- Minsk, 94 participants aged 14-17;
- Riga, 68 participants aged 11-14.

In each camp, the camp program was evaluated through:

- Structured questionnaires given to all participants on the last day of camp; these questionnaires had a response rate of 95%. Participants were asked to respond on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being the highest;
- Semi-structured interviews with 7-13 participants in each camp;
- Semi-structured interviews with 3-13 staff members – director and counselors;
- Telephone survey of a random sample of participants' parents conducted one month after the camp.

Participants

Motivation for Participation

There are two major categories of motivations to participate:

1. Social motivation – social interaction, opportunities to meet old friends and make new ones, have fun with friends, gain social skills;
2. Jewish motivation – feel part of the Jewish people, learn the history of the Jewish people, strengthen the sense of connection to the Jewish community.

Between 59% – 67% of the participants in 2014 also attended camp in 2013; between 73% – 84% of those surveyed in 2014 said that they “definitely intend to come back to the camp” in 2015.

Most participants show both motivations, with social reasons normally the stronger; this is age appropriate.

In Minsk and Kiev there was a marked increase from 2013 to 2014 in “strengthening the connection to the Jewish community” as a motivation for participation. This may be related to the political situation in Ukraine and the situation in Russia, which could have implications for Belarus also. In general, the Jewish motivation remained relatively high in Minsk.

Attitudes towards Camp

- There is a very high satisfaction rate with camp in general, counselors and the program – mostly above 4.5.
- Most participants would “change nothing” in camp or at most would “extend it.”
- In all four camps there were particularly high rates of satisfaction with the social atmosphere and Israeli counselors – 4.7 and 4.8.
- In all four camps there was a growth in the level of satisfaction with the study of Jewish subjects.
- In Moscow and Minsk there was a slight decrease in the level of satisfaction with the local counselors; in Kiev this decrease was more pronounced – from 4.8 to 4.1.
- The wish to return to camp next year increased in all camps and by an average of 10% compared to 2013 in Moscow, Kiev and Minsk.
- Lower satisfaction levels – under 4.0 – are reserved for the physical conditions and food; there was dissatisfaction with the quest activity in Kiev.

Two major reasons are given for the high level of satisfaction with the camp:

1. Atmosphere – characterized as uniquely open, accepting, family-like, enabling and creative, allowing the participants to express themselves freely and feel they belong.
2. Counselors – characterized as friendly, helpful, dedicated, approachable, informal. They serve as role models, and are loved and cherished by the participants. In open questions about the 3 best things in camp, between 35% – 60% mentioned the counselors. The central role played by the counselors emphasizes the importance of their selection, training and supervision.

Camp Impact

The camp impacts on the participants across all three main parameters – affect, behavior and cognition – as measured by the questionnaires:

- Affect:
 - ✓ Feel part of the Jewish people – impact of 3.7 – 4.3 on average;
 - ✓ Feel closer to Israel – impact of 3.6 – 4.1 on average.
- Behavior:
 - ✓ Learn more – impact of 3.5 – 4.1 on average;
 - ✓ Participate more – impact of 3.2 – 4.1 on average;
 - ✓ Wish to participate more in community activities – impact of 3.2 – 4.1 on average;
 - ✓ Wish to influence my community – impact of 3.3 – 3.9 on average;
 - ✓ Plan to read and learn more about Israel and Jewish subjects I learned about in camp – 3.5 – 4.1 on average.
- Cognition:
 - ✓ Learn interesting things – impact of 4.1 – 4.3 on average.

The level of impact is highest in Minsk and lowest in Riga; this may reflect cultural differences and the camp models.

The Role of Israel

From the questionnaires to participants and in-depth interviews with a sample of the participants, it is clear that Israel plays a central role in all the camps.

- Camps provide a multi-faceted representation of Israel, from simplistic, generalized and often stereotyped images (like hot sunny weather, nice smiling people), to more complex issues including social problems, political conflict, and the challenges of aliya.
- Representation often revolves around the life of young of person (i.e. the counselor) in Israel, including such aspects as army, school, employment, post high school education, music, youth leisure activities.
- The Israeli army is a focal issue of interest for participants and counselors alike, and even more so in 2014 due to the Israel-Gaza conflict that unfolded over the summer.
- Many participants want to visit Israel (if they have not already done so), and this seems to be a direct outcome of camp.
- Some participants regard Israel as a future option/land of better opportunities, because of its perceived scientific and technological development, and due to current local political instability.

- For the (few) participants who lived in Israel as younger children (their families subsequently moved back to the FSU), camp is a means to maintain their connection with Israel.

Impact on participants as perceived by their parents

Parents' perception of the camp's impact on their children parallels to a large extent the impact as defined by the participants themselves. When asked to list the three most important impacts of the camp on their children, parents mostly noted social interaction – both social skills and having a good time, knowledge about Judaism, and friends.

Counselors

Counselors range in age from 18-32; the average age is 24. Israeli counselors – who are post army service – are older than the local FSU counselors. One-third of the counselors are students; the rest are employed. About one-third of those employed work in fields related to their work as a camp counselor.

Motivation for Working on Camp

For those who work in a field related to education, their time as a camp counselor is a continuation of their professional activities, while for those who work in unrelated fields, camp presents an opportunity to break their routine and to enjoy a link to the Jewish world.

Most counselors choose to work on camp for a combination of motivations, among them:

- Sense of importance of Jewish education in the FSU – local counselors feel they contribute to their own community, while Israeli counselors feel it is important to present Israel;
- Personal sense of satisfaction from working with children;
- Closure of a personal circle: for those counselors who had been camp participants, their work is a way to “give back” what they received;
- Personal development – an opportunity to develop skills such as creative, teamwork, leadership;
- Maintain connections with Jewish friends and the camp atmosphere.

Camp Impact on Counselors

The impact on counselors seems to parallel the impact on participants:

- Knowledge: counselors learn new things about Judaism each time they work on camp. Their preparations for activities and interaction with colleagues provide an opportunity to gain knowledge and many of them value this.
- Sense of belonging: camp enables many counselors to feel connected to their local community and to the Jewish people in general. It allows them to maintain relations with Jewish colleagues, and with future members of their local community. Several counselors emphasized that by working in camp they build and develop their own local Jewish community.

Counselor Training

Most counselors value their training and regard it as relevant. The training provides them with specific skills and experience:

- Teamwork;
- Importance of expressing opinions;
- Need to examine oneself;
- Group facilitation;
- Planning an activity.

Some note the need for advanced training and more training in working with children. Camp directors also note that this is missing from the counselor training, and also recommended that training be spread throughout the year rather than be focused on the period immediately before the camp.

Parents

When asked for their position on Jewish camps in the FSU, 69% of the parents interviewed responded that they are very much in favor, while a further 29% that they are quite in favor. There was no significant variance across the four locations.

The survey was an opportunity to gauge parents' opinions on the establishment of a parents' committee and the functions of such a committee. Out of 89 parents asked:

- 26 felt that such a committee should deal with program and content – develop programs, introduce new ideas, suggest topics, provide master classes.
- 12 felt that such a committee should provide financial support and 11 administrative support.
- 24 felt there was no need for such a committee.

The highest level of interest in establishing such a committee came from the parents interviewed from the camp in Kiev, where out of 18 interviewees, 7 said they would be involved in such a committee to a very large extent and 6 to a large extent. While this may be the result of political and communal factors, the recommendation is that a pilot committee be established in Kiev and its operation documented and disseminated among other communities. At the same time, other models for parent involvement could be examined.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Camps provide a meaningful and impactful experience for participants and counselors.
- Participants learn much about Judaism and Israel, and general topics, while also acquiring relevant social skills. Through their participation they feel they belong to a larger Jewish community.
- Camp impact on (primarily) local counselors seems to parallel the impact on participants. They too find in camp an opportunity for learning and self-development, and for maintaining their connection with the Jewish world.
- These parallel routes of impact, as well as the high rate of returning campers and counselors each year, suggest that camp is an act of developing one's local Jewish

community. Israeli counselors are not an integral part of this community, but their support is through providing a connection to modern Israel.

- The political situation in Russia and the Ukraine had no significant impact on camp. Altogether, it seems that the camp atmosphere was dominant enough to contain the relatively minor political tensions, and to provide an environment free of political conflicts. However, the official “no politics” camp policy was questioned by some participants and counselors.
- **Maintain Continuity:** camp is the year’s peak event but in order to develop community should not remain the single event. Continuity should be maintained through ongoing events, preferably with a nucleus of the same counselors and participants.
- **Parental Involvement:** Parents provide another channel for having an impact on participants’ routine lives, and various ways of parental involvement in the camps should be developed and implemented.
- **Counselor Training:** Include in counselors training experiential parts of counseling children. This can better prepare new counselors with no prior experience to the “shock” of working in camp for the first time.
- **Re-examine the implicit “camp models.”**
- **Re-consider the “no politics” policy:** in a camp where teenagers discuss issues of identity and belongingness, it is only natural that some participants would wish to discuss it. Camp should provide them with a structured channel to do so.

Next Stages

The examination of this program is continuing in 2015.

7. Summer Camp in Israel for Russian-Speaking Jewish Youth: An impact study of the camp held in Israel in summer 2014 for 105 13-18 year olds was conducted by Zofnat Institute for Organizational Consulting, Development and Research by means of a questionnaire, and examined the impact of camp in terms of involvement in the Jewish world (among participants from the FSU) and levels of satisfaction with various aspect of camp (among all participants).

Among the participants were:

- 60 from Israel;
 - 29 from Russia;
 - 9 from Ukraine;
 - 1 from Lithuania.
- There is a **link between involvement in Jewish activities throughout the year and camp’s impact:** the more participants are involved throughout the year, the more they are affected by camp (and vice versa).
 - **Satisfaction levels with camp** in general, the program, and counselors **are very high** (above 4.5). Satisfaction with whole-camp events and trips are medium-high. 85%

of participants wish to return to camp next year. **High satisfaction is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for impact** of a voluntary, informal education program.

Impact

Among the participants from the FSU, 23 attended for the first time. On a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 the highest, they rated their intention to:

- Be more involved in their local community at 3.7;
- Participate in a program that involves visiting Israel at 4.1;
- Become a counselor at 3.0.

The level of general satisfaction with the camp (among all participants) was high – 4.8, in comparison to 4.5 with the 2013 camp. The difference between the level of satisfaction with the activities and the counselors was negligible.

Community Involvement

- More than half of the participants from the FSU take part in Jewish activities in their communities 0-3 times a year. 42% take part at least once a month or more.
- There is a significant correlation between the degree of involvement in Jewish activities throughout the year, and the impact of the camp in 2013 in terms of involvement in activities and visiting Israel. The more participants are involved throughout the year, the more they are affected by camp (and vice versa).

Intention to Participate in 2016

- Of the 40 participants from the FSU, 59% said they definitely wish to participate next year, and a further 26% that they probably wish to participate.
- Of the 59 participants from Israel, 65% said they definitely wish to participate next year, and a further 20% that they probably wish to participate.

These figures are similar to the findings from the 2013 camp.

8. Roots trip for high school students in the Heftziba network of Jewish day schools in the FSU:

A wide-ranging evaluation of the Roots trip to areas in the western part of the FSU where large Jewish communities existed in the 19th century and where the Holocaust took place, conducted by the Szold Institute, is using both quantitative and qualitative research methods to assess the impact of the program on the students' sense of connection to their Jewish identity, and to their Jewish roots and Israel; which educational processes had the greatest impact on the students before, during and after the Roots trip; their level of satisfaction with the program; as well as the program's impact on the accompanying teachers. An initial report compared the pupils' sense of connection before and after the trip.

The results of the Masa Shorashim evaluation indicate that it is a deep and moving educational program that creates an unusual impact and shows a very high standard of content and organizational execution. Participating in *Masa Shorashim* can certainly be

considered as a foundational experience in forming the identity of the participating youth, and influencing their choices about their future. It is no wonder that 83% of the pupils who took part in it recommended that all Jewish youth in the FSU should participate in it.

Summary of Findings

1. Strengthening Jewish identity (religious-traditional)

- Two thirds of the respondents after the trip reported that following the journey their connection to Jewish religion or Jewish tradition was strengthened to a large or very large extent and 61% of them said that the journey contributed to a large or very large extent to the formation of their Jewish identity.
- 37% of the respondents after the trip versus 26% of the respondents before the trip began to observe Shabbat after returning from the journey. 78% of those returning versus 66% of those departing knew following the journey more about Jewish customs. More pupils reported that they feel a strong connection to the Torah (32% of those returning versus 23% of those departing) and the Jewish religion (38% of those returning versus 30% of those departing). The percentage of returnees who said they do not feel a connection to Judaism was low compared to the percentage departing who felt so (8% versus 12% respectively).
- 87% of those returning versus 76% of those departing noted that after the journey they feel it is important that Jews continue to observe Jewish traditions.
- Following the journey, 65% of the pupils said they are happy to be Jewish to a large or very large extent, versus 60% before the journey.

2. Increasing the sense of belonging and commitment to the Jewish people

- About two thirds of those after the trip said that following the journey their connection to the Jewish people was strengthened to a large or very large extent.
- Following the journey more students felt that it was important for them to influence what is happening in the Jewish world (59% of the returnees versus 33% before the trip), and are willing to act so that the Jewish people will continue to exist (61% of the returnees versus 48% before the trip).
- 73% of the returnees versus 63% before the trip noted that following the journey they felt they know Jewish history to a large or very large extent.
- 84% of the returnees versus 74% of the respondents before the trip noted that after the journey Jewish history is very important for an understanding of the present and that they are proud to be Jewish.

3. Strengthening the participants' relationship with their local Jewish community

- About half the participants said that following the journey their connection to their local Jewish community strengthened to a large or very large extent.
- Following the journey more pupils became active within the Jewish community in their place of residence (52% of the returnees versus 37% before the trip).
- 62% of the returnees versus 49% before the trip felt that it is important for them to be involved and active citizens within the Jewish community in their place of residence.

4. Willingness to become involved in the subject of the Holocaust

- Two-thirds of the students said that they are aware to a large or very large extent of the Holocaust as a part of their identity as Jews, and 71% said that they feel a stronger connection to values of humanity and tolerance to a large or very large extent.
- After the return from the journey, more pupils felt that they were prepared to act so that people will not forget the Holocaust (79% of the returnees versus 59% of the respondents before the trip), and that they feel sympathy when they meet elderly people who could have suffered during the Holocaust (94% of the returnees versus 81% of the respondents before the trip).
- However, following the journey more students felt the need to stay away from anything related to the Holocaust (18% of the returnees versus 5% before the trip), and held the opinion that the negative behavior of the Jews is the cause for anti-Semitism (30% of the returnees versus 21% before the trip).

5. Strengthening the relationship with Israel and Zionist identity

The sense of connection with Israel strengthened following the journey (mean of 3.80 among the respondents after the trip versus 3.62 before the trip). Statistically significant differences between attitudes before and after the trip were found regarding the statements: "Israel is necessary for the Diaspora" (mean of 3.25 among the returnees versus 2.95 among respondents before the trip), and "Jews in Israel and Jews outside Israel have a common destiny" (mean of 3.71 among the returnees versus 3.26 among respondents before the trip).

- More than half of the pupils said that following the journey they feel to a large or very large extent a stronger connection to Israel than they had felt before going on the journey.
- After the return from the journey more students felt that the Jews in Israel and Jews outside Israel have a common destiny (56% of the returnees versus 34% before the trip), that the Jewish people cannot survive without the State of Israel (50% of the returnees versus 30% before the trip), and that the only safe place for Jews is Israel (44% of the returnees versus 28% before the trip).
- Following the journey more pupils felt a strong connection to Israel (43% of the returnees versus 28% before the trip), began to show interest in learning about Jewish life in Israel (68% of the returnees versus 57% before the trip), and noted that there is a high likelihood they will make aliya in the future (47% of the returnees versus 38% before the trip).

6. Was the impact of the journey maintained after nine months?

The students who went on the journey: Nine months after returning from the journey there was some natural decline in students' attitudes compared to those expressed about a month after returning from the journey (a decrease that is not statistically significant), but even after this period all the positive indices were higher than those measured prior to the journey and almost all negative indices are lower than those measured previously.

All students: A comparison between the attitudes of all **the pupils in the same school year** who took part in the research before some of them went on the journey, and nine months after their return, suggests that all attitudes which were phrased positively became more positive after nine months, and in almost all aspects negatively phrased attitudes were lower after nine months. These findings indicate that **the journey had a very positive impact on the attitudes of many pupils in the school** irrespective if they personally went on the journey. In fact, among those students who did not go on the trip there was a more significant change in attitudes before and after than among those who did go on the journey. This finding is explained by the widespread formal and informal sharing of journey experiences by those who returned from it, and because the attitudes of students who did not go on the journey were in the first place more negative about the subjects of the journey. It should be emphasized that **the highest scores in all positive indices and lowest scores in almost all negative indices were found among those returning from the trip, which indicates that the prime impact of the journey is, naturally, on those who experienced it personally.**

7. Preparations for the journey and its relevance to its success

Most of the students who went on the journey participated in a preparation for it at different levels of intensity. The preparation included an extended study of historical aspects, getting to know the communities along the route of the journey, an emotional preparation, and writing a research or personal work. In addition, the pupils prepared ceremonies which were part of the journey.

About two-thirds of the students said that familiarity with the historical content and the emotional preparation for the journey were relevant to a large or very large extent and about 60% of the students said that preparations for the ceremonies, the preparation for the trip, and writing papers were relevant to the experience of the journey to a large or very large extent. About a third of the teachers (3) felt that the preparation for the journey was important to a very large extent. Half of the teachers (4) felt that the preparation was important to a large extent, and one teacher felt that the preparation for the journey was important only to a little extent. The teachers considered the benefit of the preparation in forming a personal connection to the subjects of the journey, creating a significant learning experience, increasing the capacity to withstand emotional pressure, and group cohesion.

8. Feedback about the program and its organization

Student feedback: Most of the students who went on the journey during the past two years said that the entire itinerary can be regarded as “strong” and that “everything was good about the trip.” Most of the students described the evening activities, informal talks with the guides and the availability of emotional support as important activities to a large extent. About two-thirds of the students found their parts in the ceremonies during the journey and the Israeli guides as important activities to a large or very large extent, and about a quarter regarded the personal diary writing as an important activity to a large or very large extent.

Most students were satisfied with the physical conditions.

87% of the students indicated that the possibility to make friends from other schools was important for them to a large extent, while some 80% of the students said that being with their friends, the free time spent with them and the informal talks with them were also important for them to a large or very large extent. 70% of the students said that it was very important for them to be in an environment with almost only Jews.

As for journey weaknesses, about a third of the students said that the journey was too intense physically and 42% felt that the journey was too intense emotionally. About a quarter of the students felt that the trip was overloaded with content, and 16% said that the bus rides were too long.

Teacher feedback: The escorting teachers (8 out of a few dozen) were united in their positive opinions about the journey. In their view, *Masa Shorashim* is essential for the building of a sense of belonging as part of the formation of the pupils' Jewish self-identity. **About two-thirds (6) of the teachers felt that the main purpose of the journey was achieved to a very large extent and one-third the believed that it was achieved to a large extent.**

Israeli guide feedback: The guides (6 out of 7) think that *Masa Shorashim* is a very successful, high quality project. **Three guides assessed that the purpose of the journey was achieved to a large extent, and three guides assessed that the purpose of the journey was achieved to a very large extent.**

Recommendations

1. Preparation:

- a. It is recommended that standards be created for the preparation for the trip in the schools, in order to ensure that all pupils who plan to join the trip take part in it. This preparation will establish a common baseline that will enable the participants to utilize the journey to the fullest, to be ready for the emotional aspects in it, and also to create a better flow of the educational content based on a more uniform knowledge level within the group.
- b. Almost half of the pupils reported that the emotional intensity of *Masa* was either high or very high and we recommend that the psychological preparation towards the journey be enhanced, and that time for processing experiences of the trip be built into the schedule.
- c. The importance of writing in the diary should be emphasized, both for its value during *Masa Shorashim* and as a way to preserve the experience.

2. Create a firm narrative that combines the three aims of *Masa Shorashim*

(Holocaust, Judaism and Zionism): Seeing the Holocaust as a conceptual timeline can be used to integrate knowledge about Jewish history and the Holocaust with knowledge about the State of Israel and Israeli society. As most of the sites are not connected to Zionism it is important that the guides present and express the Zionist-Israeli context throughout the journey. It may be suitable to express this context through evening activities or while traveling. It is advisable that the activities

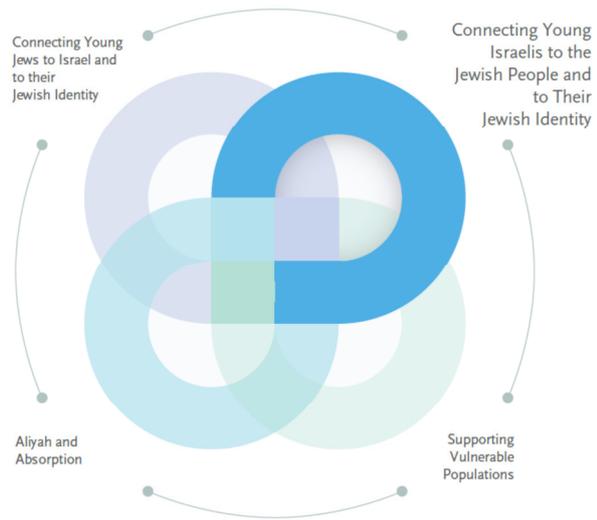
concerning Israel and Zionism reflect the knowledge about Israel that the students received in the schools prior to the journey.

3. **Vary and balance the choice of sites:** Both pupils and some of the guides recommended varying the repertoire of the sites visited and the activities in them. Our observation showed that pupils are less interested in sites that are connected to rabbinic stories about overcoming troubles, and are more attracted to sites highlighting deeds of bravery during the Holocaust that enable them not to feel victimized, but rather feel proud. By the same token, they are attracted to humanistic stories about the courage of the Righteous Gentiles as a source of moral inspiration and an entry point for discussion about human values. We therefore recommend balancing and varying the sites in *Masa Shorashim* to maintain a high level of pupil interest and involvement. When the pupils return from the trip and lead activities for other members of the school's student population, the school's collective memory will be strengthened if the trip does not always follow the same route.
4. **Guide training:** in line with request from the guides we recommend:
 - a. Including in their training additional content and materials about the spiritual life of the Jews in the areas visited;
 - b. Reducing the number of sites visited in any one day;
 - c. Relating the sites visited to participants' background, expanding the Israeli-Zionist context, and conducting a preliminary trip to the main sites.
5. **Social aspect:** the goal of creating social connections between students from different schools is in line with the concept of Jewish peoplehood and can contribute to reducing assimilation. The students expressed their desire for maximal social interaction in different ways, so that it could be advisable to examine providing them with additional meeting opportunities during the journey, while respecting the differences in religious views of the various educational systems within the Heftziba network.
6. **Clarification of responsibilities:** Three types of personnel are responsible for implementing the journey: logistics personnel, Israeli guides and the escorting teachers. Our observation, as well as teacher's reports, indicates that not everyone was clear about who is authorized to determine the routes of the buses and especially what are the responsibilities of escorting teachers. Therefore, we recommend:
 - a. Clearly defining the areas of responsibility for each of the three types of personnel;
 - b. Clarifying expectations as well as building an assessment mechanism for optimal cooperation.
7. **Encouraging participation in *Masa Shorashim*:** The most effective way to encourage more pupils to participate in the journey is, according to the teachers to:

- a. Share the experiences with other pupils in the schools. This could be done in a variety of ways – at formal and informal meetings in school and via social networks;
- b. Provide more information about the journey;
- c. Involve pupils who went on the journey in teaching material related to it to other pupils.

Perhaps encouraging parents to become more involved would reduce their objection to their children's participation, so inviting parents to accompany the trip might be considered.

The question of subsidizing the journey should be considered, depending on the resources available for the program or on resources that could be obtained from other sources.



III. Connecting Young Israelis to the Jewish People and To Their Jewish Identity

1. Bringing It Home: The time young Israelis spend within Diaspora Jewish communities as short or long-term is almost invariably a profound, often life-changing experience, that exposes young Israelis – whose Jewish identity is an inherent but often unexamined part of their Israeli identity – to the nature of Jewish identity and the complexities of Jewish engagement in communities outside Israel. Often, young Israelis will say that they left Israel Israeli but returned to Israel Jewish. The Jewish Agency has identified the potential of the impact of their time in the Diaspora on their identity and commitment to Jewish life to encourage these young people to become change agents for Israeli society, where Jewish identity is concerned, as well as developing a social commitment to reducing the gaps within Israeli society.

For over 45 years, The Jewish Agency has been sending young Israelis to serve as staff on North American Jewish camps. The main goal of the program is to provide “a taste of Israel” within the North American camp setting, where the Israeli counselors serve as a “living bridge” between the two cultures. For many of the Israeli counselors, the North American Jewish camp experience is also their first encounter with North American Jewry and its diverse models of Jewish expression. Often in their early 20s, the time these young Israelis spend in various camp programs across North America is hypothesized to change their perceptions regarding Jewish life, Jewish diversity, Jewish identity, connection to Israel, and perhaps most importantly – Jewish Peoplehood. Bringing It Home seeks to capture that change, and capitalize on it, through a process of reflection and processing, which will lead to a more positive and stable connection on the part of the camp counselors to Jewish values and activism. For the 2014 camp season, the second year in which a seminar helped some of the camp counselors reflect on their experiences, The Jewish Agency partnered with UJA Federation of New York to explore this framework and its effectiveness.

a. Post-Shlichut Seminar

In the first stage of the program, a seminar was held near New York for counselors from camps that are either supported by the NY Federation or which serve the New York community. Out of a possible 282 shlichim from 27 camps, 123 chose to attend the seminar. They represent 18 camps and 46.8% of the potential participants; 6 participants from other camps in North America specifically asked to attend, so that the total number of participants was 129.

Educational Rationale of Seminar

1. Enable returning shlichim to process and reflect upon their experiences at camp, focusing on their experiences as Jews and Israelis in a new and different environment.
2. Help returning shlichim understand the wider context of the summer camp experience, exposing them to rich and diverse Jewish communities and expressions in New York.
3. Make returning shlichim feel that The Jewish Agency and the Jewish community of New York, through the UJA Federation of NY, have invested in them and continue to be invested in their future as committed and active Jews and Israelis.

Evaluation Goals and Research Questions

1. Did the seminar achieve its goals?
2. What programmatic elements should be preserved? Which should be discarded?
3. What is the added value of this particular programmatic component to the larger Bringing it Home goals?

Methodology

1. Participatory Observation by the evaluator.
2. Personal Conversations:
3. Focus Groups held at the end of seminar.
4. Written feedback from seminar staff.

Findings

- The seminar was successful in enabling returning shlichim to process and reflect upon their experiences at camp.
- It was a welcome experience by the participants, even though it was clearly not a priority for them at the start of the Bringing It Home seminar.
- Their narrative of the summer is a complex one made of many micro-experiences, most of which are not explicitly Jewish, but rather exemplify the challenges inherent to the shlichut setting.
- At the same time, though not made of necessarily of “Jewish moments,” the summer was framed through the seminar programmatic intervention as a Jewish experience.

- Operation Protective Edge was hard emotionally and cognitively, but most of all provided an extreme prism to make existing tensions and aspects of the situation even clearer.
- The encounters with the local community, through its sites, institutions and people, were perceived positively by participants. The encounters provided participants with new knowledge regarding the larger Jewish context of their summer.

Conclusions

- Reflection and processing is vital to a healthy shlichut experience.
- Reflection and processing facilitates long-term relationship with the organized Jewish world.
- Reflection and processing might facilitate Jewish activism and leadership in Israeli society.

Recommendations

1. From the participants' point of view the seminar was an extremely valuable experience and making this type of activity an integral part of the shlichut experience should be considered.
2. Maintain current seminar structure.
3. Consider carefully location.
4. Offer programs or venues for involvement when shlichim return home.
5. Focus on programs/venues of involvement which are complementary to personal goals.
6. Explore ways of negotiating the perception among returning shlichim that if you didn't experience it you can't understand it.
7. Expand the follow-up research design.

b. Alumni Conference, Kfar Maccabiah

This was held in mid-December in Israel and included an opening plenary; two workshops in groups according to the type of camp where the Shlichim worked, the purpose of which was briefly to process the shlichut experience; two rounds of professional workshops operated by organizations that deal with various aspects of Israeli and Jewish activism in Israel, to discuss various subjects on the agenda and to introduce possible tools for activity – in each round the participants chose the session they preferred to attend; an employment and volunteer opportunities fair – (list of participating organizations attached); and following dinner – a performance by a well-known Israeli artist.

The entire delegation of summer camp shlichim of 2014, as well as the Zionist seminars delegation was invited to the conference – in total 950 shlichim who had worked on a summer camp for the first time (out of a delegation of 1,150 shlichim). The actual number of participants was 150.

Evaluation Objectives

1. Is there evidence of a tendency toward active involvement in Israeli society among the returning shlichim in general?
2. If such a tendency exists, what are its characteristics? (Type of involvement, in Israel or overseas, short-term or long-term involvement, on a volunteer or employment basis, etc.)
3. Can differences be identified in the nature of the involvement between those who participated in the Processing Seminar in New York and those who did not?
4. Can concrete characteristics of BIBH be identified that contributed to advancing this activity among the returning delegation?
5. Feedback from participants regarding the conference itself.

Methodology

1. Observation: The investigator was present during the plenary and in the two morning workshops for the Processing Seminar alumni group.
2. Focus groups: 4 focus groups - 2 groups for Processing Seminar alumni and 2 for delegation alumni who did not participate in the Processing Seminar in New York.

Findings

The focus group discussions dealt with three central issues: the conference experience, the summer experience four months later, and the current lives of the returning shlichim.

- i. **Reasons for Attending the Conference as Raised during the Focus Groups**
 - The summer as a significant experience; seeking a place to reminisce and talk about the experience with peers.
 - Opportunity to meet friends.
 - Desire to examine the possibility of continuing to participate in this kind of activity, and in a Jewish Agency activity, in particular.
 - Place to discuss Jewish Identity, Peoplehood, etc.
 - Break from the routine of studies, work.
- ii. **Hypotheses of the Focus Groups as to why Other Delegation Members did not Attend the Conference**
 - Timing and weather.
 - Sense that the conference was not relevant.
- iii. **Feedback from the Participants Regarding the Conference**
 - Generally positive.
 - Markedly similar comments were made as in the Processing Seminar in New York – the importance of the attention paid by the organization that sent them; the feeling that a forum of other returning shlichim is the most appropriate forum for a conversation about the shlichut experience; the importance of a non-judgmental conversation that offers a place to discuss difficulties as an integral part of the shlichut experience and that does not present them as a personal failure; and finally

– the creation of a renewed connection with the significant experience as part of a new context of living in Israel, in the present.

iv. Recommendations for Improvement

- Create a shorter program.
- Hold the conference on a few different dates so that more people find a date convenient for them.

v. Summer 2014

- Need to continue to discuss the summer experience.

vi. Changes Following the Summer (Emotional-Cognitive-Values-Related)

- An understanding that the summer camp shlichim themselves do not know enough about Israel.
- Exposure to Jewish life in North America.
- The beginning of a process of clarifying the shaliach's Jewish and Israeli identities.
- Creating a personal-emotional-cognitive link with Jewish Peoplehood in North American Jewry.
- Strengthening the connection to their personal Israeli identity, as part of their experience of feeling like outsiders in North America.
- A more profound understanding of the goals and activity of The Jewish Agency, and fostering of identification by the returned shlichim with these goals and activities.

vii. Changes Following the Summer (Behavior)

- Many noted that following the summer experience, they changed their academic majors to fields more closely related to education or deferred their studies so they could travel again. Some of them noted that they were actively searching for an opportunity to join other Jewish Agency activities, and that was the main reason for their attending the conference. Some said that they are convinced that there had been a personal change, but they still did not know what it is and how it would be expressed in their daily activity, at least not in the short term.
- Specifically, some of the participants noted that since their return from shlichut they have begun to deal intensively with questions of hasbara.

viii. Obstacles to Continued Integration in Educational Activity in the Coming Year

- Academic studies.
- Need to support themselves and pay for their education, so that an additional shlichut or volunteer activity in Israel is not relevant.
- Conference timing: for several participants, the conference and its employment opportunities came too late.
- Additionally, those who also attended the post camp seminar in New York were asked to address the concern raised then that they would not be able to discuss the significant experience of summer camp shlichut with people who had not had the experience. The general response was that they still feel they cannot share the more transformative aspects with those who did not share the experience.

c. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

- It is difficult to determine unequivocally to what extent the returning delegation in its entirety is interested in continuing with Jewish-Zionist activity, and moreover, whether they are interested in continuing to be actively involved with Diaspora Jewry or in translating their insights from their encounter with the Diaspora to activity within Israeli society. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that among those who attended the conference, there is great interest in continuing to hear more about additional options for involvement in the field.
- The participants in the focus groups shared similar needs – a significant experience and a question of how to integrate it into their lives in Israel – but at the same time, with internal heterogeneity in terms of their maturity to make a choice.

d. Main Recommendations

- i. Protect and expand the processing dimension.
- ii. Search for a more dynamic model for placement which offers tracks for integration in Jewish educational work in Israeli society.
- iii. Focus for the next 5 years on quantitative assessment channels, with questionnaires designed based on qualitative findings and the project's core questions: can significant indicators be determined for (a) the influence of the summer experience on Jewish involvement in Israeli society and (b) the BIBH model's contribution to the success of (a).

Next Stages

The examination of this program is continuing in 2015.

2. Project TEN: Project TEN is a service-learning program, developed by the Activism Unit of the Jewish Agency for Israel, that has been operating since 2012. It brings young Jewish adults from around the world, both Israelis and their Diaspora peers, to work together on sustainable projects in developing regions for three months, in cooperation with local non-governmental organizations in the field such as orphanages and hospitals. Volunteers study an integrated curriculum focusing on Jewish values and community, engaging in international dialogue on Jewish identity.

There are currently 4 functioning centers: Gondar, Ethiopia; Kibbutz Harduf, Israel; Oaxaca, Mexico; and Kiryat Shmona, Israel. The activity intends to have a positive influence on:

- The communities in which it is operated;
- The volunteers;
- Jewish peoplehood.

Since the program's inception, 400 Israelis have participated, and 239 young Jews from other countries. Of the non-Israeli participants, 66 participated in centers in Israel and 173 in centers in other countries – 53 in the standard long track program and a further 120 in shorter tailor-made tracks.

An evaluation study of the project was conducted in 2014-2015 by Ergo for The Jewish Agency.

The Study

The study reached out to all participants in programs that finished between February 2013 and January 2015. It consisted of 3 stages:

- Step I: In-depth interviews with program managers and past volunteers in order to develop the questionnaire
- Step II: Participant survey through a series of questionnaires sent to participants by email at 3 separate stages:
 - ✓ 1 month before the start of the program – 139 participants and 83 respondents (60%);
 - ✓ In the last week of the program – 197 participants and 126 respondents (64%);
 - ✓ 3-10 months after completion of the program – 106 participants and 56 respondents (53%).

67 participants responded to both pre and post questionnaires; 31 responded to all 3 questionnaires. The questionnaires were sent up to 4 times to participants who did not respond.

The respondents to the pre and post questionnaire represent the entire participant population, with regards to gender, country of origin and center in which they volunteered, but the third questionnaire has a lack of respondents from the Harduf center in Israel because of the timing of the program.

- Step III: In-depth interviews with participants and center managers.

Primary Objectives

1. To find out the degree to which the goals of the project are being reached where the volunteers are concerned.
2. To explore ways for improvement.

Primary Research Questions

- How are the participants affected by the program?
- To what degree are the participants satisfied with the program and its components?
- Is there a difference between the centers?

Profile of Participants

A difference was found between the profile of the Israeli and non-Israeli participants:
Israelis:

- Tended to be in the year following the end of military service and to have completed high school education; 75% were aged 21-23 and 10% aged 24-26; 82% were female;
- Generally combine the program with a trip to the same country;
- 75% are secular;

- Tended to hear about TEN for the first time 4 months or more prior to participation, usually from friend or relative, and few via Google search.

Non-Israelis:

- Tended to be between semesters, degrees or jobs; tend to have an academic degree (BA or MA) or a professional qualification; one-quarter are still in college; 27% were aged 21-23 and 47% aged 24-26; 61% were female;
- Generally combine the program with a trip to other countries;
- Come from all religious denominations with no clear pattern;
- About half heard about TEN for the first time 3 months or less prior to participation, from varied communication channels – Birthright is the most prominent but also MASA, The Jewish Agency, Google and friends;
- 71% of them are in regular contact with an Israeli; 15% have at least one Israeli parent and 97% have visited Israel at least once. The most common channel for visiting Israel was birthright (53%)
- 60% were not involved in activities organized by their local Jewish community before the program; 43% had attended Jewish summer camp, 40% Jewish Sunday school, 34% Jewish day school, 31% Jewish youth movement and 31% Jewish activities on campus; 23% had not been involved in any Jewish programming before.

Parents and/or siblings were involved in 80% of the decision to join TEN. 70% of the participants reported their family supported the decision, 40% even reported they helped with financing it. About 40% of participants reported they raised concern. Half (56%) of the participants believe they would have chosen another volunteering program, if they had not joined TEN; yet only a minority (12%) actually applied to another program.

Non-Israelis are the overwhelming majority of volunteers in the centers in Israel – 86-100%; Israelis are the majority in the centers in other countries – 74-85%.

Findings

I. Reaction to Program

Based mainly on responses to questionnaires completed at the end of the program:

- When asked to sum up their reactions in one word, participants used words that were overwhelmingly positive and presented an emotional affect. 89% noted that their emotional response was positive. The words broadly fit into three categories:
 - ✓ “appreciation,” “unforgettable,” “meaningful”;
 - ✓ “wow,” “happiness,” “amazing”;
 - ✓ “confusing,” “complicated,” “challenge.”

Program Goals

- Significant percentages, ranging from 75-96%, felt that the program’s goals that were very or quite important to them were realized or exceeded expectations. These goals included:
 - ✓ Having an adventure and having fun;
 - ✓ Contributing to the local population;

- ✓ Becoming a better person;
- ✓ Acquiring skills and experience that will help me work for social change in the future;
- ✓ Visiting this specific region or country.
- Among the goals regarded as of less importance were those relating to Jewish service learning and interaction with Diaspora Jews (42-43% defined these goals as important or very important). The level of satisfaction with the realization of these goals was also significantly lower (61-64%).

Personal Growth

- The participants reported personal growth, with 71% noting that they felt “inspired” to a very high or high degree and 19% to a moderate degree; 65% that they felt “empowered” to a very high or high degree and 24% to a moderate degree; 58% that they felt “contented” to a very high or high degree and 29% to a moderate degree; and 55% that they felt “fulfilled” to a high or very high degree and 34% to a moderate degree.
- 94% reported that they felt to a high or very high degree they had “grown as a person” because of the program and 4% to a moderate degree; 89% that they felt “proud” of what they had done to a very high or high degree and 4% to a moderate degree; and 85% that “the experience put things in perspective and showed how the world works” to a very high or high degree and 13% to a moderate degree.
- 83% felt to a high or very high degree that they had “earned from the volunteering experience” and 17% to a moderate degree.
- 58% felt to a high or very high degree that their “time, skills and efforts were used appropriately” and 37% to a moderate degree.

Mix of Elements within the Program

- 18% felt that the mix of all the components was right; 24% felt that the time devoted to Jewish service learning sessions should be decreased; 20% felt they need less personal time, while 24% felt that there should be more time to connect to the local population and partners, and 23% that more time should be devoted to volunteering.

Satisfaction

- When asked to grade their general satisfaction with the program, 64% felt satisfied to a high or very high degree, and 28% to a moderate degree.
- 59% were satisfied with the volunteer program of the component to a high or very high degree and 29% to a moderate degree; 45% with the learning and reflecting sessions to a very high or high degree and 33% to a moderate degree.
- 78% reported that they were likely to recommend to friends to join the program; 5% that they would definitely or probably not recommend it.
- The majority of program graduates expressed an interest in maintaining a relationship with the project – 51% expressed interest in receiving a newsletter, 47% in joining the program as a counselor or guide, 44% in joining social initiatives of an alumni association.

Jewish Service Learning

- 61% felt to a very high or high degree that the Jewish service learning sessions were interesting and relevant and 22% to a moderate degree.
- 57% felt to a very high or high degree that these sessions added value to the experience and 24% to a moderate degree.
- 51% felt to a very high or high degree that they helped the participants deepen their self-understanding and 27% to a moderate degree.
- 44% felt to a very high or high degree that they provided insights for their volunteer work and 30% to a moderate degree.

The scores tended to be higher among the non-Israeli participants.

Volunteering

- 85% found their volunteering project interesting to a very high or high degree and 8% to a moderate degree.
- 68% felt to a very high or high degree that their volunteering work provided them with new insights in the learning and reflection sessions and 21% to a moderate degree.
- 62% felt to a very high or high degree that their volunteering work was highly significant to the local population and 27% to a moderate degree.

Social and Recreational Activities

- 67% felt to a very high or high degree personal involvement and the creation of mutual responsibility and 24% to a moderate degree.
- 66% felt to a very high or high degree that the Shabbat celebrations and Jewish rituals enhanced their experience and 24% to a moderate degree.
- 62% felt to a very high or high degree that there was a good connection and atmosphere within the group and 24% to a moderate degree.

Program's Most Important Elements

- The elements of the program of most significance to the participants were:
 - ✓ Volunteering – 72%.
 - ✓ Connection with the local population and local partners – 62%; in open-ended questions some of the participants questioned whether their work had really helped the local population. The higher the participants' sense of the program helping the local population, the more they defined their experience as powerful.
- The Jewish learning sessions were graded as one of the two most significant elements of the program by 11%.

Staff and Preparation

- There was an overall satisfaction level with the staff of 58% to a very high or high degree and 20% to a moderate degree.
- The overall level of satisfaction with the orientation stage was 52% to a very high or high degree and 32% to a moderate degree.

- The participants saw great importance in the behavior of the program coordinator and a higher acceptance standard for participants.
- Important aspects of the program to the participants are its efficiency and management – the quality of the coordinators, its continuity, and the participants' ability to recognize the program's benefits.
- 57% felt to a very high or high degree that the staff served effectively as educators and 27% to a moderate degree.
- 54% felt to a very high or high degree that the staff embodied Jewish core values in their behavior and 26% to a moderate degree.

Differences between TEN Centers

There are differences between the evaluation of different centers:

- The emotional impact was higher in the Harduf, Israel and Ethiopia centers and lower in Mexico;
- Expectations important to the participants were more likely to be realized in Harduf and Ethiopia, and less likely in Mexico;
- The level of general satisfaction was lower in Mexico;
- The volunteer work was rated higher in Ethiopia and lower in Mexico;
- The staff was rated higher by the non-Israeli participants;
- The learning and reflecting sessions were rated higher by the non-Israeli participants and in Harduf and Ethiopia and lower in Mexico.

Differences between Cohorts

The evaluation period covered between 2-5 sessions in each center.

- Ethiopia has seen improvement since mid-2014, though there was erosion in some components in the last session of the evaluation period;
- India has seen improvement in some components and erosion in others;
- Mexico saw higher scores in the first and third sessions, but erosion in the second and fourth;
- Kiryat Shemona saw a marked improvement in the second session;
- Harduf scored high in both sessions.

II. Changes in Attitude

There was a significant change of attitude between the pre-program questionnaire and the one filled in upon completion of the program among the non-Israeli participants who completed both questionnaires where a number of issues is concerned:

- I feel a strong connection to Israel – growth of 20%;
- I know Jews who come from different backgrounds than me and practice differently than I do – growth of 19%;
- I have a clear sense of where I want my life to go – growth of 18%;
- I am familiar with Israeli society and history – growth of 5%.

Among all the participants there was growth in their attitude to specific issues:

- I feel I have the capabilities and means to influence my home community country;
- I feel connected to other Jews around the world.

The lack of change in certain attitudes was explored in the in-depth interviews and two possible explanations emerged:

- Change can only be recognized when a program graduate faces a situation in which the dimension in which there may have been change plays a role, for example, choosing what to study or where to work;
- The experience was incomplete because the lack of non-Israeli participants negatively impacted on the potential to strengthen a sense of Jewish peoplehood.

III. Changes in Intended Behavior

Among those participants who completed both questionnaires, the declared intention to change modes of behavior at the end of the program showed marked differences in specific fields though there is no clear pattern:

- I volunteer for disadvantaged or poor people in my home country – growth from 53% who strongly or somewhat agree to 75%.
- I actively read and learn about what happens worldwide – growth from 69% to 73% who strongly or somewhat agree.
- I am an active member in my local community and country – growth from 31% to 59% who strongly or somewhat agree.
- I act as ambassador for the Jewish people in my daily life – growth from 35% to 39% who strongly or somewhat agree.
- I act as ambassador for Israel in my daily life – growth from 34% to 50% who strongly or somewhat agree.
- Follow the news about Israel consistently – growth from 50% to 68% who strongly or somewhat agree.
- Involvement in activities related to Israel – growth from 42% to 63% who strongly or somewhat agree.
- Study Hebrew consistently – growth from 13% to 51% who strongly or somewhat agree.

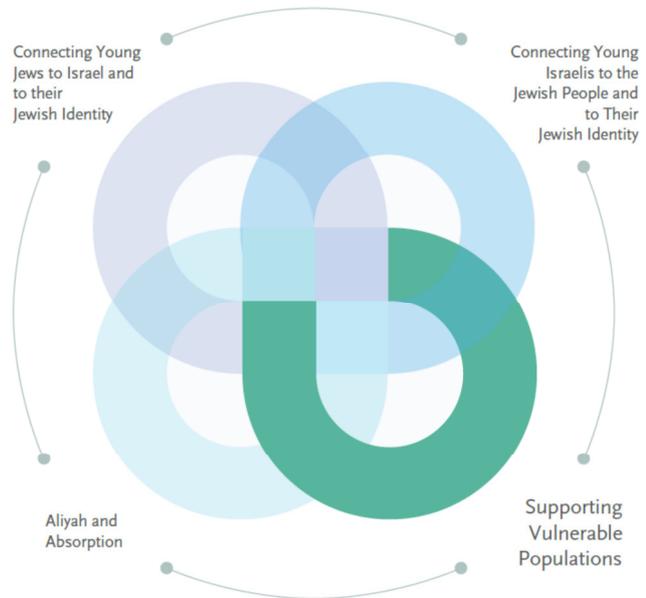
In some fields there was a decrease in intention:

- I engage in Jewish rituals with family and friends – decrease from 66% to 45% who strongly or somewhat agree.
- I study Jewish texts – decrease from 35% to 34% who strongly or somewhat agree.

No changes were found in actual behavior between the pre-program questionnaire and the one conducted 3-10 months after its completion. This could be due to the small sample.

Next Steps

To evaluate the impact of changes already implemented and in view of the complexity of some of these findings, the program management and The Jewish Agency Strategy, Planning and Content Unit intends to conduct a follow-up evaluation that will provide data from a larger number of cohorts and participants, and a better understanding of the evolution of the program.



IV. Supporting Vulnerable Populations

Youth Futures: Around 40% of Israel's population are children and teens aged under the age of 18, of whom 16% are defined as at-risk, and this program operates in 35 locations in Israel's social and geographical periphery and serves around 12,000 beneficiaries – children, teens, and their family members, in all sectors of Israeli at-risk society, through 400 mentors who act as big brothers and sisters.

As of 2012-2013, a mechanism has been in place for staying in touch with graduates and recruiting them for volunteer work with the program. The aim is:

- Maintain and reinforce the program's impact over time;
- Recruit the graduates as positive role models for current program participants;
- Create an orderly database on the graduates;
- Assess the program's impact over time.

As of the end of 2014, some 8,000 children and teens had completed Youth Futures – 40-70 per year in each locality where the program is active. In 2014, an evaluation was conducted by Digma of teenagers who have completed the program.

The report reviews the graduates' current status in terms of the program's parameters of success, the graduates' level of satisfaction with their situation, their perception of Youth Futures' contribution, and feedback on different program elements. The graduate sample consists of 1,653 structured telephone interviews that were conducted in 30 localities by the program's graduate coordinators. In order to obtain a reliable picture of the program's long-term effectiveness, a special effort was made this year to locate and interview graduates who completed the program a relatively long time ago. Thus, 45% of the interviewees are fresh graduates (739), 38% completed the program two years ago, and the remainder have been out of the program for three or more years. Accordingly, the decisive majority of the interviewees are still in middle school (85%). The longer the graduate

follow-up continues, the more it will be possible to learn about their life trajectories and the degree to which the program affected them in the long term.

Findings

The report findings indicate that Youth Futures is viewed by its graduates as a transformative-formative, positive and enriching experience, one that helps them cope and move ahead in life. The graduates' actions and behavior in the present attest to the program's ongoing impact on its participants, even after several years have passed since contact with the staff ceased.

Participation in Youth Futures appears to reduce teens' degree of risk, help them remain in normative frameworks, and even ensure that they function in those frameworks at a satisfactory level, at least.

- Within the Youth Futures graduate sample there was an overt dropout rate from a formal school setting of just 1.3% (21 teens), half of the national rate. Of these, most were in contact with the Youth Advancement Unit of the Ministry of education which works with youth who dropped out from formal school setting (16, 76%), while a few (5, 24%) were not in contact with any study framework.
- The graduates' experience is that the program helps them fit into their study frameworks to a moderate-high degree. Over two-thirds (69%) of the graduates attribute to Youth Futures a great or very great contribution in terms of their integration in middle school, while half attribute to Youth Futures a great or very great contribution to their integration in high school.
- Similar to national data, the decisive majority of the graduates in the sample – 92% (1,409) are enrolled in academic tracks in high school; a minority are enrolled in technological tracks (3%) or vocational tracks (3%), while just one percent are in Youth Advancement's HILA program (an alternative program that enables youth to complete middle or secondary school education).
- Most of the high-school aged graduates (80%) are in a full matriculation study track. However, a significant gap was discernible between them and the Israeli youth population as a whole in terms of their performance in subjects that contribute to future employment prospects – a high percentage of them were studying mathematics at the minimal level (3 units) (77% versus 60.5%), while the percentage of Youth Futures graduates studying English at the higher levels (4-5 units) was lower than the national rate (52% versus 77%). At least two explanations are possible: it might reflect either the graduates' ongoing poor scholastic achievements or lack of encouragement for striving on behalf of educational staff and parents.
- The interview findings attest to the graduates' normative behavior during their free time:
 - ✓ 54% of the graduates in the sample (878) are in at least one after-school framework (another 0.4% are in the army or about to be recruited). All these graduates are in general enrichment frameworks (after-school activities, youth

movements), while some are also in assistive frameworks such as Bayit Cham (“warm home”) or mini-clubs for youth at risk.

- ✓ 27% participate in after-school activities, 18% are members of youth movements or similar organizations, and 16% work, nearly all in addition to their studies, half of them up to 6 hours per week.
- ✓ A small percentage reported involvement in altercations during the month prior to the interview (9%); a few reported run-ins with the police (2%).
- ✓ A low percentage of graduates were found to be in frameworks specifically for youth at risk (4%), in contact with social workers (5%), youth counselors (16%) or other entities (11%) (there could be overlap between the frameworks).
- ✓ Only a small number of graduates (41, 2.5%) were identified as needing referral to therapy providers or counselors in the community.
- ✓ All the above suggests the graduates accept support and their needs are being met.

The program reinforces and maintains the participants’ sense of social belonging and enhances their ability to cope with life challenges and to fulfill their potential.

- 76% of the graduates attach great or very great importance to being inducted into the IDF (including graduates from the minority sectors); 56% of those eligible to vote had voted in their local elections (the sphere closest to everyday life), but only 18% had voted in the Knesset elections (the more distant national sphere).
- Although the percentage of graduates engaged in volunteer activity was low (5%), 20% expressed a desire and interest in volunteering and making a contribution within the Youth Futures framework. This attests to the program’s relevance for them as well as to their willingness to act on behalf of others.

The graduates experience their status as good.

- The decisive majority of graduates (87%), and an even larger percentage of those graduates still in elementary school (94%), reported high or very high satisfaction with their present situation. Those who expressed moderate or lower satisfaction with their current lives attribute this to reasons related mainly to the scholastic sphere (49% of the respondents) – reasons that are relatively prevalent among pupils in middle school (51%), followed by pupils in high school (44%). A fifth of the responses have to do with the social sphere – primarily among pupils in elementary school (38%) and high school (30%).
- The personal and familial spheres are a source of difficulty for only a few graduates.

Two-thirds to three-quarters of the interviewees reported that the program contributed greatly or very greatly to their lives on the personal, social and scholastic levels, in that order. Fewer than half regard the program as having helped them in the familial sphere.

- After completing the program, the graduates’ perspective changes with the passage of time: the overall trend is for graduates to attribute a moderate-great contribution to the program immediately on completing it. Within 3 years there is a gradual decline in the degree of contribution that they attribute to the program,

while in the fourth year after program completion they rate Youth Futures' impact more highly. This is true for all of the program's spheres of intervention. This is probably the result of the graduates gaining perspective and experience over time. It is known that immediate satisfaction tends to be the highest and it decreases over time. The fact that it rises again, almost to same level as immediately after the program, shows the program's deep impact.

- Only half of the graduates saw a connection between Youth Futures and their relationship with their families. It is, therefore, not surprising that fewer than half of the graduates report a great or very great program contribution to the familial sphere. Relatively recent graduates attribute to the program a greater contribution to the familial sphere than do more distant graduates (who completed the program 3-4 years ago). One reason for this may be the unsystematic work with the parents and few home visits during the second two-thirds of the activity year. The new format (of working extensively with parents) should improve this.

The graduates' responses support the Mentor's central role as a meaningful adult and guide:

- 90% of the respondents perceive the Mentor as someone who helped them succeed in life to a great or very great degree.
- The respondents see the Mentor and the personal talks with him/her as their favorite part of the program, even though some were demanding in terms of emotional and cognitive effort. Half of the respondents view the entire array of program components as an effective whole.
- In cases of difficulties with Mentors, two main problems were reported: high Mentor turnover which compromised the mentoring effectiveness and a difficulty to communicate with the Mentor. Both difficulties appear once the ability to build a trusting, accepting and supportive relationship had been impaired.

Regarding feedback on the program components, the group activity was notable for eliciting criticism from a third of the respondents.

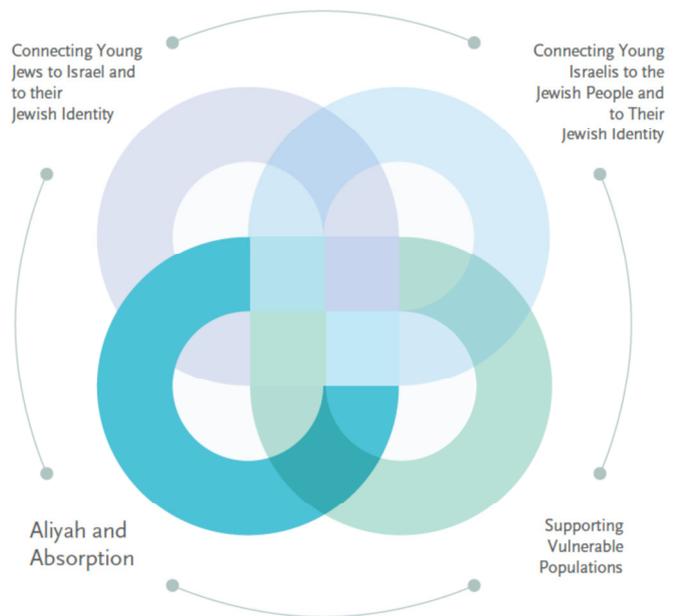
This may be understood in two ways – comparatively and on its own. Unlike the individual talks with the Mentor, group activity requires sharing the Mentor's attention with others and interacting with one's peer group, where participant problems may surface. An effort should also be made to determine which aspects of the group activity need improvement, so as to realize its potential.

Recommendations

- The findings underscore the importance of continuing to follow up on the graduates into their 20s –when they transition from youth to adulthood.
- Moreover, given the program's importance to the graduates, it may well play a meaningful role as a support system to which all graduates may turn as needed or desired. This is especially important for graduates without strong familial support.
- Given the difficulties entailed by the transition to middle school and the challenges posed by adolescence, it is clear that Youth Futures participants would benefit from

continued guidance during their middle school years – should the program have the resources to make this possible.

- The finding that graduates attribute to Youth Futures a relatively small beneficial impact regarding other familial spheres is not surprising, given that some of the work with the parents is unseen by them and that it is hard to ascribe to an outside party changes in the intimate familial relationship structure. Nevertheless, because the family is the main ongoing factor in the child's life, the crucial importance of working with the participants' parents is self-evident – especially in cases where the parents and/or their behavior constitute risk factors for the children. Thus, the change that is currently happening at Youth Futures – the intensification of work with parents on the part of the Mentor, and the systemic work with parents by the Families and Community Coordinator – are welcome steps in this direction.



V. Aliyah and Absorption

1. Potential for Aliyah among Young Jews: this survey was conducted between June 2013 – January 2014 among 1,285 people aged under 39 in various countries (excluding the FSU) who had, at some point in the past, participated in one of The Jewish Agency's programs, and 275 participants in Masa.

The survey sought to examine the push and pull factors in different countries around the world; the possible incentives that will encourage their aliyah; and the klita services that are most attractive to this population.

Among the graduates of a Jewish Agency program, the average age was 26, 72% were unmarried, 70% were college graduates, 60% were in serious employment and their focus for the next few years was divided between career and study. Among the Masa participants, the average age was 21, 98% were unmarried, 70% were high school graduates or had a partial academic-level education, 30% were in serious employment and their focus for the next few years was, for 70% of them, on studies.

Among The Jewish Agency program graduates, 81% self-defined as Jews, and 22% as belonging to the orthodox stream; 51% had studied in a Jewish school. Among the Masa participants, the entire cohort self-defined as Jews; 44% were studying in a Torah-based Masa program and a similar percentage defined themselves as belonging to the orthodox stream; 64% had studied in a Jewish school.

Both groups reported a strong sense of connection to Israel: among The Jewish Agency program graduates, 96% had visited Israel, 53% had participated in birthright and 82% reported connections with Israelis. Among the Masa participants, 87% had previously visited Israel, 17% had participated in birthright and 75% reported connections with Israelis.

Both groups reported having previously lived abroad for a period of at least several months and that they were favorably disposed to considering living in a country other than the country of their birth in the future. Israel figures prominently in that consideration, with fully 75% of both groups reporting that they had considered moving to Israel for a considerable period, in most cases, a period of more than 5 years. At the time of the survey, 44% of The Jewish Agency program graduates and 60% of the Masa participants reported that there was a high or very high probability that they would move to Israel.

The potential for aliya is higher among those who are currently less established in life and who have already taken steps towards planning their aliya. Within the group of Jewish Agency program graduates:

- Among those who had already opened an aliya file, the likelihood of their moving to Israel was 84%, while among those who had not opened a file, it was 41%.
- Among those who had participated in Masa, the likelihood of their moving to Israel was 53%, while among those who had not participated, it was 38%.
- Among those from France and South America, the likelihood of aliya was 70%, while among those from North America it was 40%.
- Among those without an academic level education, the likelihood of their moving to Israel was 60%, while among those with an academic degree, it was 40%.
- Among those not in regular or full-time employment, the likelihood of their moving to Israel was 58%, while among those in full time or regular employment, it was less than 35%.
- Among those who had lived abroad for an extended period of time, the likelihood of their moving to Israel was 58%, while among those who never lived abroad or only done so for a short period of time, it was 45%.

In addition, the research reveals that among the program graduates, the likelihood of moving to Israel is connected to the individual's sense of connection to Israel and form of Jewish affiliation:

- Among those from orthodox backgrounds, the likelihood of making aliya was 61%, while among those from reform backgrounds, the likelihood was 19%.
- Among those who had been on a summer program in Israel, the likelihood of aliya was 61%, and 54% among graduates of Jewish day schools, but only 27% among birthright graduates and 24% among graduates of Jewish supplementary schools.

Among the Masa participants in the survey, the likelihood of making aliya was relatively higher among the participants from orthodox backgrounds – 70% – than among those affiliated with other religious streams – 52%.

Israel is an attractive place to move to because it is identified as a place where there is a possibility to change one's life, bring up children and live life according to basic values – issues which are important to those questioned, while it is not identified as a country that offers economic stability, employment and welfare. At the same time, the idea of moving to Israel raises concerns about the distance from one's family, cultural and linguistic differences, and the potential for economic wellbeing.

Encouraging aliya can be advanced by providing help in several forms:

- Basic needs – employment, studies, housing;
- Access – need for absorption programs and support in the move to independent living;
- Ongoing – support that starts in the country of origin and that continues in Israel.

Within the program graduate group, the following incentives and forms of support can help advance aliya:

- Employment/studies – high level of impact;
- Rental subsidy for 6 months – certain level of impact;
- Cost of opening an aliya file – the full cost (\$250) is perceived as expensive, and 16% considered it very expensive;
- Flight subsidy – the level of subsidy does not impact while the very existence of a subsidy does.

2. Wings: Provides support to young olim who serve in the IDF having made aliya without their families. An evaluation of the program, conducted in 2015 by Ergo Consulting Group, sought to examine the degree to which the program is effective in providing counseling, guidance, and support to the young olim during and after their army service.

The findings are based on responses from 100 graduates of at least one element of the program – courses to prepare them for civilian life; help in finding employment; economic consultation – to a questionnaire sent to them by email. At the time of the survey:

- 31% of the respondents were aged up to 23;
- 36% were aged 24-26;
- 37% were over 27;
- 71% were single;
- 18% were in a relationship for over one year or married, without children;
- 10% were in a relationship or married, with children;
- 35% had been in Israel for under 5 years;
- 34% had been in Israel for 6-8 years;
- 31% had been in Israel for 9 or more years;
- 50% were from the FSU;
- 22% from North America;
- 11% from Western Europe;
- 10% from Latin America;
- 7% from elsewhere.

When asked to evaluate their situation in Israel, 88% felt to a high or very high degree that it was positive and on a par with that of native-born people they know. Where their sense of integration into mainstream society is concerned:

- 78% reported that they feel connected to what is going on in the country to a high or very high degree;
- 83% that they are studying or believe they will have the opportunity to gain a profession that is suitable for them, 79% that they have found or believe they will succeed in finding work that meets their skills, and 77% that they will manage financially;
- 90% that their command of reading and writing in Hebrew is enough for them to manage easily;
- Almost equal numbers – 87-88% – reported that they have good friends who are new immigrants or veteran Israelis.

On the question of their identity, 58% of the respondents noted that they define themselves as Israelis to a high or very high degree, while fully 90% reported that they see their future in Israel.

Contribution of the Program: 60% reported that the program helped their integration to a very high or high degree, and 66% felt that without the program their situation would be different from where it is. 19% of the respondents reported that there was a high chance that without the program they would have left the country. Fully 97% would, to a high or very high degree, recommend the program to their friends.

As they approached the end of their military service, the main issues that concerned the soldiers were decisions relating to higher education and their ability to cope financially; 72% felt that the program had helped them address their concerns to a high or very high degree. This help related particularly to:

- Learning about their rights as discharged lone soldiers – 73% to a high or very high degree;
- Helping them decide what to study – 59%;
- Defining a career path – 61%;
- Understanding how to cope financially – 57%.

Respondents felt to significantly lower percentages that the program helped them where their sense of social integration and command of Hebrew are concerned.

An indirect but important contribution of the program is the feeling it evokes in the participants that Israeli society cares about them and is interested in helping them.

3. Satisfaction level among FSU olim from 2015 with their aliya process:

This survey is conducted annually and funded by the US government grant.

The study is the fourteenth in a series of follow-up studies aimed at examining various questions relating to the process of immigration to Israel from the former Soviet Union. The

findings are based on interviews with 350 members of a representative sample of households that immigrated to Israel by airplane in 2015.

Demographic Profile of the Immigrants

Age

- 12% of the total immigrants in 2015 were under the age of 18;
- 23% were aged 18-25;
- 14% were aged 26-45;
- 15% were aged 46-55.;
- 15% were aged 56-65;
- 21% were ages 66 and over.

Family Structure

- 43% arrived on their own;
- 30% arrived together with one family member;
- 17% arrived with 2 family members;
- 10% arrived with 3 or more family members;
- The average size of the families was 2.00 members; excluding the immigrants who arrived on their own, the average size of the families was 2.69.

Level of Education

- 8% of the immigrants have less than 12 years' schooling;
- 8% have 12 years' schooling;
- 41% have 13-15 years of education;
- 43% have more than 16 years of education.

Health

- 6% of those interviewed immigrated with a family member who is seriously or chronically ill.

Main Findings

A. Motives for immigration:

1. Reunion with family and friends was the major motive for immigrating to Israel (70% said explicitly that this factor motivated them to immigrate, 68% reported that they received recommendations from friends and family members in Israel). The second and the third were push factors from the country of origin, i.e. the economic situation there (53%) and the feeling that their personal security was under threat (44%). The fourth and fifth factor were a short visit to Israel before immigrating to get acquainted (44%) and guaranteeing the children's future (41%).
2. The majority of the immigrants (72%) visited Israel at least once before immigration: 66% made at least one private trip to Israel, 4% participated in birthright Israel and an additional 1% in Masa Israel Journey.



B. Sources of information and consultation in the country of origin

1. A vast majority of the interviewees (91%) consulted with at least one source about their planned immigration; 66% consulted with more than one source. About three quarters (77%) consulted with the local coordinator of the Jewish Agency, 57% consulted with friends, relatives and acquaintances in Israel 15% consulted with friends and acquaintances abroad, 8% with an Israeli representative of The Jewish Agency.
2. The vast majority of those who sought advice expressed satisfaction with the official with whom they consulted; however, 11% expressed dissatisfaction with the consultation with the Israeli representative of The Jewish Agency.
3. About 41% of the immigrants maintained at least occasional contact with The Jewish Agency. An additional 57% contacted The Jewish Agency only close to their immigration.
4. Two-thirds (66%) would have preferred frontal meetings for consultation and to receive information, 19% preferred communication via the internet and 15% telephone communication.

C. The process of immigration

1. 78% of the immigrants waited less than a year from the time they decided to immigrate to the day they embarked the plane to Israel, 46% waited only up to 6 months.
2. 43% waited more than 3 weeks from the day they registered for the flight till their flight; only 1% were delayed due to factors related to The Jewish Agency.
3. Only a small minority (less than 1%) reported difficulties related to their arrival at the airport and/or difficulties with their luggage.
4. 8% reported that they had special needs related to the flight, most of them (90%) reported that their needs were met.

D. Participation in relevant activities prior to immigration

1. 60% participated in at least one activity related to Jewish education; 14% participated in meetings aimed at presenting information about immigration and absorption programs.
2. The Jewish Agency's representatives are the main source of information about immigration and absorption program: 55% received information from this source. While other sources of information were mentioned, each was noted by no more than 18% of the respondents.

E. Satisfaction with Jewish Agency's services abroad

Almost all the families (95%) contacted a representative of The Jewish Agency abroad regarding issues related to the immigration process. Fully 97% were satisfied with the treatment they received; only 3% expressed dissatisfaction.

F. Satisfaction with the reception process in Israel (which is the responsibility of Ministry of Immigrant Absorption)

1. Almost the families (97%) chose the route of direct absorption.

2. 92% were either very satisfied (52%) or somewhat satisfied (40%) with their reception in Israel; 8% were not satisfied.

G. Comparative analysis between the survey of 2014 and the survey of 2015

1. *Socio-demographic profile of the immigrants*

As a background for understanding and explaining the differences in the findings between the two surveys it is important to appreciate the differences between the socio-demographic profiles of the two surveys:

- The profile of the 2015 immigrants shows some decrease in the percentage of immigrants from Ukraine (40% in the present survey versus 47% in the previous survey; this change is paralleled by some increase in the percentage of immigrants from Russia (from 43% to 50%); however, these changes are not statistically significant.
- There was a decrease in the percentage of households in which at least one of the members is either seriously or chronically ill (from 18% to 6%).
- No differences were found in age or education profiles, nor in the frequency of previous visits to Israel.
- When comparing two surveys that examine issues at different points in time, there is a question as to whether the differences between the socio-demographic profile of the two sample groups should be neutralized. It would seem to us that in the context of this survey it is important to examine those issues relating to the factors impacting on the differences between the two surveys – changes in the situation under examination, changes in the reasons for immigration, changes in the population group being surveyed – and therefore the impact of the differences in the socio-demographic profile between the two surveys should not be neutralized.

2. *Motives for immigration*

- The sample of 2015 immigrants indicates a slight increase in the percentage of interviewees who reported the importance of the economic situation in the country of origin (from 40% to 53%) and a short visit to Israel that helped them get acquainted with the country (from 30% to 41%); this factor appeared for the first time in the survey of 2014 immigrants and increased in the survey of 2015 immigrants. No differences were found between the two surveys where other factors were concerned.

3. *Sources of information and of consultation in the country of origin*

- The data of 2014 immigrants' indicated a decrease in the percentage of those who turned to someone for a consultation (from 97% to 91%). The survey of 2015 immigrants indicates stability on this issue.
- No differences were found in the percentage of those who consulted with The Jewish Agency.

4. *The process of immigration*

a. *Length of time between making the decision to immigrate to Israel and actualizing it*

The survey of 2014 immigrants revealed a shortening in the time between making the decision to immigrate to Israel and actual immigration in comparison to the survey of 2013 immigrants. The data of the 2015 sample indicates stabilization in the time between making the decision to immigrate to Israel and actualization of this decision.

b. *Time lag between registration to the flight and embarking the plane*

No differences were found between 2014 and 2015 samples.

c. *Difficulties in the process of flying to Israel*

- No differences were found between the two surveys either in arrival at the airport or in dealing with luggage.
- No differences were found in the percentage of those reporting special needs related to the flight, though there were some differences in the nature of the reported needs, and some "new" needs were noted – physician, medical insurance, vegetarian food.

5. *Participation abroad in various activities related to immigration and evaluating the impact of these activities*

- In the present study there is an increase in the percentage of those who participated in at least one activity (from 55% to 63%); this is due exclusively to an increase in the level of participation in activities in Jewish cultural centers (from 32% to 42%).
- No changes were found in the sense that participation in such activities contributed to the strengthening of the participants' Jewish identity. Yet some activities did show an increased impact. The impact of attending a Hebrew-attending language ulpan increased from 39% to 54%, the impact of participation in youth movement increased from 76% to 93%, and the impact of attending a summer camp increased from 50% to 74%.

6. *Satisfaction with the service of the Jewish Agency's representatives abroad:* no difference was found between the two surveys.

7. *Satisfaction with the reception process in Israel* (responsibility of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption): no differences were found between the two surveys.

4. **Satisfaction level among FSU olim from 2014 with their aliya**

process: This survey is conducted annually and funded by the US government grant.

The study is the thirteenth in a series of follow-up studies aimed at examining various questions relating to the process of immigration to Israel from the former Soviet Union. The findings are based on interviews with 350 members of a representative sample of households that immigrated to Israel by airplane in 2014.

Demographic Profile of the Immigrants

Age

- 17% of the total immigrants in 2014 were under the age of 18;
- 38% were aged 18-50;
- 25% were aged 51-65;
- 20% were aged 66 and over.

Family Structure

- 38% arrived on their own;
- 36% arrived together with one family member;
- 15% arrived with 2 family members;
- 11% arrived with 3 or more family members;
- The average size of the families was 2.07 members; excluding the immigrants who arrived on their own, the average size of the families was 2.73.

Level of Education

- 9% of the immigrants have less than 12 years' schooling;
- 7% have 12 years' schooling;
- 39% have 13-15 years of education;
- 45% have more than 16 years of education.

Health

- 18% of those interviewed immigrated with a family member who is seriously or chronically ill.

Main Findings

A. Motives for immigration:

1. Reunion with family and friends was the major motive for immigrating to Israel (66% said explicitly that this factor motivated them to immigrate, 65% reported that they received recommendations from friends and family members in Israel). The second factor was guaranteeing the children's future (40%), the third was push factors from the country of origin, i.e. the economic situation there (40%) and the feeling that their personal security was under threat (40%). Just about one third (30%) mentioned that they came to Israel before immigrating for a short visit to get acquainted.
2. The majority of the immigrants (77%) visited Israel at least once before immigration: 93% made at least one private trip to Israel, 12% participated in birthright Israel and an additional 4% in Masa Israel Journey.



B. Sources of information and consultation in the country of origin

1. A vast majority of the interviewees (93%) consulted with at least one source about their planned immigration; 66% consulted with more than one source. About three quarters (74%) consulted with friends, relatives and acquaintances in Israel, and the same percentage (74%) consulted with the local coordinator of The Jewish Agency; 18% consulted with friends and acquaintances abroad, 10% with an Israeli representative of The Jewish Agency.
2. The vast majority of those who sought advice expressed satisfaction with the official with whom they consulted; however, 24% expressed dissatisfaction with the consultation with an Israeli official and 9% expressed dissatisfaction with The Jewish Agency local coordinator.
3. About 49% of the immigrants maintained at least occasional contact with The Jewish Agency. An additional 47% contacted The Jewish Agency only close to their immigration.
4. Above two-thirds would have preferred frontal meetings for consultation and the receiving of information, 17% telephone communication and 15% communication via the internet.

C. The process of immigration

1. 77% of the immigrants waited less than a year from the time they decided to immigrate to the day they embarked the plane to Israel, 44% waited only up to 6 months.
2. 39% waited more than 3 weeks from the day they registered for the flight till their flight; only 3% were delayed due to factors related to The Jewish Agency.
3. Only a small minority (3%) reported difficulties related to their arrival at the airport and/or difficulties with their luggage.
4. 5% reported that they had special needs related to the flight, most of them (83%) reported their needs were met.

D. Participation in relevant activities prior to immigration

1. 63% participated in at least one activity related to Jewish education; 14% participated in meetings aimed at presenting information about immigration and absorption programs.
2. The Jewish Agency's representatives are the main source of information about immigration and absorption programs: 53% received information from this source. While other sources of information were mentioned, each was noted by no more than 20% of the respondents.

E. Satisfaction with Jewish Agency's services abroad

Almost all the families contacted a representative of The Jewish Agency abroad regarding issues related to the immigration process. Most of them were satisfied with the treatment they received; however, an average of 6% expressed dissatisfaction with the local consultation they had with The Jewish Agency emissary or local employee.

F. Satisfaction with the reception process in Israel (which is the responsibility of Ministry of Immigrant Absorption)

1. Almost the families chose the route of direct absorption.
2. 87% were either very satisfied (50%) or somewhat satisfied with their reception in Israel; 13% were not satisfied.

G. Comparative analysis between the survey of 2013 and the survey of 2014 immigrants

1. Socio-demographic profile of the immigrants

As a background for understanding and explaining the differences in the findings between the two surveys it is important to appreciate the differences between the socio-demographic profiles of the two surveys:

- The profile of the 2014 immigrants shows a significant increase in the percentage of immigrants from Ukraine, 47% in the present survey (data that also fully represent their percentage in the relevant population) vs. 19% in the previous survey; this change is paralleled by a significant decrease in the percentage of immigrants from Russia, from 61% to 43%. (This too, represents their percentage in the relevant population as a whole.)
- There was a decrease in the percentage of 1-person households from 50% to 38%, and a concomitant increase of 2-3 person families from 42% to 51%.
- There was an increase in the percentage of households in which at least one of the members is either seriously or chronically ill (from 8% to 18%).
- No differences were found in age or education profiles, nor in the frequency of previous visits to Israel.
- In addition to the differences in the socio-demographic profile of the immigrants, one can point at changes in the factors behind the decision to immigrate, primarily changes in the security situation in the country of origin (Ukraine).
- When comparing two surveys that examine issues at different points in time, there is a question as to whether the differences between the socio-demographic profile of the two sample groups should be neutralized. It would seem to us that in the context of this survey it is important to examine those issues relating to the factors impacting on the differences between the two surveys – changes in the situation under examination, changes in the reasons for immigration, changes in the population group being surveyed, particularly where the significant increase in the percentage of immigrants from Ukraine is concerned – and therefore the impact of the differences in the socio-demographic profile between the two surveys should not be neutralized.

2. Motives for immigration

- The sample of 2014 immigrants indicates a slight decrease in the percentage of interviewees reporting the two main motives, i.e., those related to “reunification with family” (“some of our family members already live in Israel” and “recommendations of relative and friends living in Israel”). This

decrease was accompanied by an increase in the percentage of those who reported the impact of a sense of insecurity in their country of origin (from 26% to 40%) and the economic situation in the country of origin (from 30% to 40%) as motives for immigration. These differences between the two surveys are associated with the increase in the percentage of immigrants from Ukraine.

- Immigrants of 2014 reported a factor that was not mentioned in previous surveys – short visit to Israel in order to get acquainted with the country (probably to evaluate expected chances for absorption).

3. *Sources of information and of consultation in the country of origin*

- The data indicate a decrease in the percentage of those who addressed someone or somebody for consultation (from 97% to 91%).
- No differences were found in the percentage of those who consulted with The Jewish Agency.

4. *The process of immigration*

a.

The survey of 2014 immigrants reveals a shortening in the time between making the decision to immigrate to Israel and actual immigration. In comparison to the survey of 2013 immigrants, there was an increase in the percentage of families that waited a relatively short time, i.e., less than six months (44% in the present survey vs. 32% in the survey of 2013 immigrants).

b. *Time lag between registration to the flight and embarking the plane*

In comparison to the sample of 2013 immigrants the present sample indicates a decrease in the percentage of those who waited more than 3 weeks from the day of registration to the flight (from 51% to 36%). The average waiting period decreased from 21 to 18 days. It is worth noting that comparisons between the relevant findings of surveys of 2011 and 2012 immigrants and that of 2013 immigrants revealed an increase in the time between registration and the actual flight. This might have indicated a turning point in the trend of decreasing waiting time which was observed in 2011 and continued in 2012; the change in the present study refutes the hypothesis of change in the trend.

c. *Difficulties in the process of flying to Israel*

- No differences were found between the two surveys either in arrival at the airport or in dealing with luggage.
- No differences were found in the percentage of those reporting special needs related to the flight, though there were some differences in the nature of the reported needs (Increased in requests for special or kosher food).

5. *Participation abroad in various activities related to immigration and evaluating the impact of these activities*
 - In the present study there is an increase in the percentage of those who participated in at least one activity (from 55% to 63%); this is due exclusively to an increase in the level of participation in activities in Jewish cultural centers (from 32% to 42%).
 - No changes were found in the sense that participation in such activities contributed to the strengthening of the participants' Jewish identity; the impact of attending a Hebrew-language ulpan decreased from 54% to 40%, and the impact of participation in a birthright Israel trip decreased from 89% to 74%.

6. *Satisfaction with the service of the Jewish Agency's representatives abroad:* no difference was found between the two surveys.

7. *Satisfaction with the reception process in Israel* (responsibility of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption): no differences were found between the two surveys.

5. Matzofim: (Hebrew acronym for Excellence and Diminishing Gaps) is one of a number of programs included in the *Yesodot* project. *Yesodot* provides a complementary educational framework, formal and informal, for Ethiopian new immigrant children and youth from pre-school through 12th grade. *Matzofim* works to advance students who live in absorption centers and study in grades 1 – 9, and help them progress educationally. The program places an emphasis on culturally-sensitive assistance and uses tools designed to ensure the optimal integration of students in school, and provides help to the Ethiopian students in small study groups. During the 2013–2014 school year, the program reached out to 1,100 students in 15 different absorption centers.

In addition to formal academic study, within *Matzofim*, the new immigrant children from Ethiopia receive a supportive framework at the absorption centers, including help from mentors, and a range of enrichment activities.

In 2014, an evaluation was carried out in two absorption centers by *Mishtanim Evaluation and Organizational Consulting* – *Ibim* and *Kiryat Yam*. In the evaluation questions were asked about processes and results of the *Matzofim* program. A variety of evaluation tools were used: analysis of students' report cards in school over a series of report periods, analysis of the children's situation as conducted by the absorption center staff, analysis of the questionnaires which were distributed to the children at the beginning and end of the evaluation period and which included open and closed questions, interviews with staff members and teachers in the program as well as teachers in schools and the students themselves. The analysis of the children's educational situation was based, in part, on special tests devised for the program that the children completed.

An analysis of the findings indicates that the evaluation tools are valid. The students' experience of learning, as reflected in the questionnaires, mirrors to a large extent the achievements noted in the program's mapping process and in the students' school report cards.

Principal Findings:

Satisfaction:

- **The students feel very good in the program at the beginning and at the end** (average of 4.5 and 4.6 on a scale of 1 – 5, respectively), **and express a high sense of comfort in asking question in Matzofim lessons both at the beginning and end of the evaluation period** (on average 2.6 on a scale of 1 – 3 at both points in time). **A majority of the parents interviewed expressed satisfaction from the program, while admitting they are not really familiar with it.**
- **Learning:** The students **in both age groups report significant learning in Matzofim. The students' sense of learning reflects to a great extent their achievements as revealed by the analysis of them by the staff, the tests they completed and their school report cards. The program contributes most significantly to the students' advance in Hebrew.**
- Student's sense of learning (self-reporting through evaluation questionnaires): children in Middle School feel that they learned Hebrew and Math *to a very great extent*. These findings are supported by objective measures of the students' progress.

Language Acquisition

- A considerable percentage of the students by the end of the year achieved a level of basic knowledge in Hebrew that is above their class level. Nevertheless, in Hebrew the grades the students received in the special tests they were given are significantly higher than the analysis of their knowledge of the language based on conversations and activities in class. It is possible that the tests and staff appraisal of their situation focus more on reading and writing and less on oral skills.
- The absolute majority of the students progressed at least one stage during the year.

Math Studies

- **Where math studies are concerned, the program's contribution is smaller:** the average progress in math is one class level only.

Additional Fields of Study

- The majority of respondents to the questionnaires feel that they learned other/additional things: songs, stories and drawing, Jewish holidays, behaving nicely to teachers and other adults, and behaving nicely towards friends. There were those who also learned study habits and different perspectives of self-confidence and life happiness.

Self-Image and Identity

These aspects were examined by means of two implicative questions: one in which the children were asked to relate to a story about a new immigrant child dealing with a study challenge in the class, and the second in which they were asked to identify children, in photographs they were shown, whom they thought would succeed with their studies, including children from the Ethiopian community and non-Ethiopian children – religious and secular. **The following conclusions were drawn:**

- a. The program's importance lies in **generating awareness of the difficulty** which is the basis for the ability to contend with it. At the conclusion of this period the participants understand that it is not simple matter to achieve success in their studies, and that success should not be taken for granted, and we believe this offers the possibility of getting to grips with the natural difficulty with which the new immigrant children from Ethiopia have to contend.¹
- b. Boys from the Ethiopian community appeared to relate to themselves as achieving similar results to those of other boys who are not from the community, but view the girls from the community as less successful than girls who are not from the community. (The girls believe they and the other girls will succeed, and that the boys will achieve less success, and the situation was the other way round for the boys).
- c. There appears to be at the elementary school age a more positive attitude among girls than boys of the chances of girls and boys of Ethiopian origin succeeding.
- d. **Ethiopian children experience themselves as being similar in their achievements to other children not of Ethiopian origin but consider that others from the other gender who are of Ethiopian origin will succeed less.**

Program's Contribution on and in the Opinion of Students and their Parents

- The majority of the respondents feel that **good things happened to them during the year and that they happened thanks to Matzofim**: 96% of the students at Ibim, 100% of elementary students at Kiryat Yam, and 80% of the middle school students at Kiryat Yam. 44% of the responses relate to educational perspectives and 56% to non-educational perspectives: friends, improving behavior, and a love for learning.
- There is no significant difference in the students' level of comfort in the program or in school.
- Parents see the importance of the educational activity in the framework of Matzofim (and in all their children's educational activities), and appreciate that others donate to their children. However, the parents are not thoroughly familiar with the different aspects of the program.
- **The program has only been partially successful in realizing its goals in relation to the parents of its participants despite the various efforts to engage them.** Parents have internalized the program's educational and academic importance for their children and their desire to be involved, yet in reality there is less recognition and involvement in the educational activities of their children in Matzofim and school.

¹ At the beginning of the period, when the child in the story is given a mathematics assignment in the class, the respondents primarily believe that the student will not be capable of handling the assignment. At the end of the year they predominantly believe that the student will struggle but that they will not necessarily fail.

The conversations conducted with parents express a sense of tension between their apparent desire to be involved and the obstacles which prevent them from realizing this involvement. The main obstacles in their eyes include difficulties in understanding the language and a heavy work load. All the parents feel that they have not contributed to the program's activities as parents and that they have learned no tools from the program.

- Parents whose children participate in the program do not distinguish an indirect contribution of the program on their other children who do not participate in the program.

Integration into school

- Children see themselves as integrating relatively well and feel they have many friends at school. Children at Kiryat Yam, where the absorption center is situated in the neighborhood itself, have many friends who are not new immigrants. At Ibim these possibilities are far more limited and therefore children are less integrated.
- However, the school teachers see mainly the challenges and difficulties and less the progress and strengths of the students – except where those students with great potential are concerned. The school teachers seem not to be aware of Matzofim and its contribution to the children, and appear prone to “judge” new immigrant students by the same criteria as for native Israeli students in their class.

Advancing the Program's Work Plan

- **Support provided to absorption centers by an expert** / external organization and careful adherence to the program's work plan are most important to ensure the full realization of the program.
- **The program teachers are very professional and dedicated;** they express positive attitudes towards the students and belief in their ability to advance, and they understand the goals of the program.
- The study program is clear and well organized, and includes the basic knowledge and subjects required by the students in different age groups in the education system. The program's teachers were satisfied by the study program; they are less aware of its cultural adaptation.
- The lessons that were observed were characterized by a positive and supportive atmosphere for the children and the majority were well organized and managed. The level of studying challenged a majority of the students yet created experiences of success.

Factors Inhibiting the Advancement of the Program

- There are many absences and discipline problems that negatively impact on achievement levels. The differences in the level of the students create a challenge.
- **Math Lessons:** Ethiopian new immigrant children have difficulty in certain activities to a pronounced degree. While they progress rather quickly in learning addition, every aspect of subtraction, division, and fractions is very difficult for them. Moreover, mapping processes point out the slow progress of the program's students in this discipline and many students' difficulties with progressing beyond a second

grade level in math. It could be that the study program is not fully adapted to the cultural characteristics of Ethiopian new immigrant children.

- There appears to be a certain problem of teacher turnover during the course of the year, leading to an interruption of the flow of learning.
- **Intersection with schools:** communication revolves primarily around logistical issues. There is no pedagogical coordinator between the two frameworks. The school teachers who were interviewed do not know the program and do not discern the external influence / push which accelerates their students' progress and general educational integration in the school system.

Are the changes in the students likely to remain over an extended period of time?

- It is clear that the changes which occur in the students will last because the students clearly acquired basic skills, a positive feeling and self-confidence.
- However, it would appear that no comprehensive framework of influence was created. While it is understood that this was not the program's goal, it is self-evident that the creation of a comprehensive framework would help ensure that the educational system continues with the integration of the Ethiopian students in the way Matzofim started.

Principal recommendations

A number of these recommendations require additional investment of resources in order to enhance the impact of the program.

- **Math study:** Further thought should be given to developing effective models for the instruction of mathematics for Ethiopian new immigrants and/or to assigning this subject to teachers with a wealth of experience and expertise specifically in this field and/or to ensuring that the teachers apply the methods that are already in use.
- **Presentation of the program to the students' teachers at the schools, and sharing the knowledge accumulated on the program over the years:** with the emphasis on presenting the culturally-adapted work model, unique thought patterns, teacher cooperation in the understandings and pedagogical tools that the program has developed and, no less important, cooperation of the teachers from the schools in the educational progress of the students, and their accomplishments on the program. All this is designed to develop more positive positions among teachers towards new immigrant students from Ethiopia and to provide them with tools to cope with their sense of difficulty and helplessness, a sense which causes even greater difficulties for the students' full integration. It is suggested that the program staff relate to themselves as mediators between the new immigrants' cultural perspectives and those of their schools.
- Try to find **additional models for involving the parents** so that they work together with the children and participate in lessons and are not merely information consumers. This aspect is partially implemented in some absorption centers. There is no evidence of the extent of the contribution this makes and, as such, it is proposed that the program consultants extend and enhance this aspect.
- Fully formulate what the program's contribution is expected to be during the second year of the children's participation in it, in light of the significant jump made during

the first year, and the only moderate progress achieved in the second year in Hebrew, and the relatively limited progress made by the students in mathematics in the first year.

- Cultivate gender-based modules in the program, and address the varying characteristics of the boys and the girls in terms of their belief in themselves and their expectations of success.

6. Evaluation of the Preparation in Gondar, Ethiopia, for

Immigration to Israel: This evaluation project was conducted in 2015 by house mothers from all the 16 absorption centers where Ethiopian immigrants are housed after they first arrive in Israel, through interviews with families who have been living in permanent housing for 1-4 years, and who have at least one child in an educational institution. The project was the house mothers' grassroots initiative, taken in light of the expectation of renewed immigration from Ethiopia on the basis of family reunification. It sought to learn from the experiences of immigrants who have already left the absorption centers for permanent housing, in order to improve the care provided to new immigrants from Ethiopia.

The interviews were conducted with immigrant families who, between the end of 2010 and 2013, were part of The Jewish Agency's extensive processing facility in Gondar.

During those years, in the 3-4 months prior to their immigration, while waiting in Gondar, adults were eligible to participate in a 320 hour preparation program made up of 200 hours of Jewish studies, 100 hours of Hebrew and 20 hours devoted to life skills. In addition, those waiting for immigration received a monthly living allowance and nutritional support – *teff* (Ethiopian cereal), food for pregnant or nursing women, and food for babies and small children up to the age of 3. In addition, anyone who wanted to could take part in synagogue activities, and primary school studies. Activities were also provided for youth and kindergarten services operated.

Interviewees

The research incorporated 64 interviews but not all the interviewees were asked the full spectrum of questions.

Of the 36 respondents to the question of how long they had waited in Gondar for immigration, 8 had waited between 1-3 years, 15 had waited 4-6 years, with 12 waited between 7 and 15 years. It should be noted that this finding does not necessarily reflect on the checking process into eligibility conducted by representatives of the Israel Interior Ministry; rather it reflects on decisions by individuals and individual families who believe they have the right to immigrate to Israel on grounds of family reunification, to move to Gondar and wait there.

The interviewees had been initially housed in Israel in absorption centers throughout the country, and have now moved to permanent housing in towns ranging from Beersheva, Arad and Kiryat Gat, to Haifa and its surrounding towns, as well as Ashkelon and Beit Shemesh.

56 of the adult respondents are currently married, 7 are divorced and 1 is widowed.

Length of Wait

The lengthy period of waiting for immigration was very trying. Some interviewees highlighted the long period of waiting in poor financial circumstances; others noted the long period of waiting when families were split between Israel and Ethiopia.

Jewish Studies Program in Gondar

The situation regarding Jewish studies is complex, on two counts. On the one hand, many olim reported that the studies helped them, following their immigration, with their obligatory return to Judaism study program. Furthermore, adults and children alike said that the Jewish studies and religious activity were a special spiritual experience for them. On the other hand, though the hours of study in Gondar are supposed to be offset against the return to Judaism study program after immigration to Israel, in practice this has not been the case.

Recommendations: The conversion study program in Israel should be reviewed together with those responsible for it, in order to examine how the preliminary study program in Ethiopian can be best integrated into the return to Judaism study program in Israel, if such programs are provided in Gondar in the future.

Hebrew Language and Life Skills Preparation

Hebrew Language Study

Comments made by those interviewed in response to the question about what they would change made frequent reference to Hebrew. For example:

- “If we were taught some Hebrew so that, at least, we could speak a little that would help us.”
- “Increase the number of hours devoted to Hebrew, on all levels.”
- “Focus more on Hebrew studies, teach us in greater detail, and more time should be devoted to these studies. We have great difficulties with the language.”

The interviewees were asked to note which of the things they experienced in Gondar helped them the most with their absorption in Israel: 9 out of 22 interviewees noted Hebrew-language study, with smaller numbers of school-age interviewees noting that the study of English helped them particularly with their integration in Israel.

In contrast, when asked what was missing from the preparatory program, 8 out of 22 interviewees noted that Hebrew-language study was insufficient, while smaller numbers of school-age interviewees noted that the study of English should have included reading and

writing, and others noting that the study of mathematics should have been closer to the level in school in Israel.

Life Skills

A large number of respondents referred to life skills workshops as something that was lacking or that needs strengthening.

- “We needed guidance with regard to the nature of life in Israel.”
- “We needed preparatory activity ahead of our arrival in Israel, and training on the difference between Ethiopia and Israel. An explanation of what we could expect to encounter in Israel, in terms of day to day life. For example, what is a road, and how can we cross a road, an explanation of the Hebrew language, the education system in Israel (the division into classes according to age, the Compulsory Education Law), the value of money. We basically wanted to know how life at an absorption center in Israel would be, and what the next stage would look like when we left the absorption center and moved into permanent housing. We needed an explanation of what it means to be a citizen of Israel. It is completely different from Ethiopia.”
- “To provide more detailed explanations about Israel, and what lay ahead of us – what was waiting for us in Israel, what we were going to do, where we would live. Not just rumors about what was waiting for us there.”

Olim who, at the time, did not see the importance of the process, later regretted that they had not participated more fully. Others noted that workshops that impart practical skills, such as an embroidery workshop, were helpful and positive.

Recommendations: Jewish studies were given priority over Hebrew language and life skills studies. However, as acquiring proficiency in Hebrew is very important for successful integration, particularly practical language skills, we recommend a change be made in the ratio between the various parts of the preparatory studies, to allow more time for practical Hebrew language studies. To the same end, it is also important to place greater emphasis on the proportion of life skills training tailored to the transition to Israel.

Immigration and Inter-Personal Relationships

A subject that cropped up repeatedly as important, and as something that the olim thought should be highlighted, is the subject of relationships between couples and the importance of strengthening this element of the preparatory program:

- “In the workshops we did not receive enough information about family planning and contraceptives; we were not provided with adequate information about different types of contraceptives. The subject of health needed to be expanded.”
- “The workshop about relationships between couples was the most successful, division of roles, equality between the partners. The thing that helped me most was the activity on couples’ relationships; my husband knew how to behave in Israel, knew the laws, and we shared tasks.”
- “The area of equality between partners in Israel needs to be reinforced.”

Teaching Methods in Workshops

Several responses related to the way in which the workshops were presented. The following are specific recommendations for improving workshop presentation:

- "In the lectures in which they taught us about life skills it would have been good to have had actual demonstrations – to show us, for example, how to light the gas, and similar things." "I would like to attend concrete workshops with videos or with roles actually played out (actual examples)."
- "I would recommend working in smaller groups, and making sure we have learned what was presented at the workshops."
- "Yes, there were lectures for everyone there and, although there were lectures every few months, the problem was that the people there were of all ages. The younger ones were better educated and the older people were sick and not focused. It would really be appropriate if they arranged activities tailored to the different ages."

Food and Nutrition

It appears that the help with nutrition is very important for those waiting to immigrate, particularly in view of the financial difficulties they experience. A small number of olim said there was not enough food; others said they felt that the food facility should be expanded, and should provide support for older children and adults.

Financial Support

The financial difficulties are what the olim remember most clearly from the waiting period. This impacts on and is felt in different areas, in particular the difficulty in paying rent and finding the budget for living expenses in challenging conditions. Olim noted that there was a particular need to provide support for large families. They also said that the difficult financial circumstances prevented them from taking part, fully or partially, in the preparatory process.

Summary of Findings

The research indicates a complex picture regarding the process of preparing for immigration: the preparatory process is considered essential by experts in immigrant absorption for a successful absorption experience, and was found to be helpful in various areas and on different levels. On the other hand, there is a question mark against the effectiveness of the preparatory process as there are factors detrimental to the full success of the preparation program in Gondar. It appears that such issues as financial challenges and family difficulties made it difficult for many immigrants in-waiting to gain full benefit from the program. During the waiting period, immigrants in-waiting were primarily engaged in survival and in dealing with other existential crises and, as such, did not have the time or emotional strength to devote to the studies.

Preparation and Support in General

In view of this, and primarily due to the difficult financial circumstances of those waiting in Gondar, the principal recommendation is to speed up the process of those eligible for immigration as soon as their eligibility is confirmed. Furthermore, should a situation arise

whereby, after becoming confirmed eligible for immigration, immigrants in-waiting are forced to stay on in Gondar for some time, it is extremely important to provide them with a reasonable level of support during this time.

The overall approach to preparation for immigration should be examined, taking into consideration the number of people waiting, and the expected waiting time. There is clearly a strong connection between the existential challenge of daily life in Gondar and the ability of the immigrants in-waiting to gain the greatest benefit from the preparatory process. Thus, providing support for the basic needs of those waiting is a basic condition of conducting an effective study preparation.

In this regard, past experience demonstrates the paramount importance of providing nutritional assistance. The recommendations of the olim interviewed for the study indicate the need to extend this important facility, in order to offset hunger and poor health. Similarly, the idea and manner of providing the best possible medical assistance should be considered, while alleviating the rental fee problems of those waiting to immigrate should also be taken into consideration.

The remarks made by those interviewed relating to employment of local workers at the preparation center, and abuse of their status should be reviewed.

7. Becoming Independent: Evaluation of the Preparation Ethiopian Olim Receive for their Move from an Absorption Center to Permanent Accommodation:

The Becoming Independent evaluation project was designed to examine possibilities for improving the preparation of olim from Ethiopia for their move from an absorption center to life in permanent housing. The research incorporated 64 interviews with families who have been living in permanent housing for 1-4 years, and who have at least one child in an educational institution.

Few olim report proficiency in Hebrew, while reading and writing proficiency, on all levels, is inferior to that in speaking. There is great difficulty in teaching adults who do not have writing skills in any language to attain the fine motor skills required for writing, and many of the adults do not learn writing at all. This generates a sense of frustration which stops many of them from learning Hebrew altogether, including speaking, while difficulties in this area impact on other areas of life also, among them the way in which olim access various services. Difficulties are particularly noticeable where health care is concerned, while the paperwork makes it difficult for the olim to submit requests for assistance to the National Insurance Institute.

There is a high rate of unemployment among Ethiopian olim, particularly among women, but no indices of success have been defined. The main fields in which olim work are cleaning (women), and industry (men). Many found work through manpower agencies or the government Employment Bureau. Few participated in employment workshops at the

absorption centers, and even fewer attended professional training. This may be due to the need to work less in order to study and train, and the concomitant detrimental effect on income. Ethiopian olim are wary of asking for help when their rights at work are violated.

The absorption process is long and complicated; the oleh experiences it in an all-encompassing manner, so that consideration should be given to how to create an integrative support process that stretches from preparation in Gondar, through the time living at the absorption center, to the transition to independent living in permanent housing.

Ethiopian olim recognize the support they receive from all levels of absorption center staff. Discussion of how to improve the absorption process of olim in the future should bring together bodies and organizations that support the olim throughout the entire absorption process. There is a need to develop indices to measure success for such areas as language acquisition, sense of independence and employment levels.

The issues that remain a challenge for olim even some years after leaving the absorption centers that emerge from this evaluation are very similar to the findings from the evaluation of the move of Ethiopian immigrants to permanent housing conducted by Mishtanim in 2012.

1. Introduction

The Becoming Independent evaluation project was designed to examine possibilities for improving the preparation of olim from Ethiopia for their move from an absorption center to independent living in permanent housing. The project emerged from a meeting that took place in May 2015 between the house mothers in absorption centers in the south of the country and the Mevasseret Zion absorption center near Jerusalem. Realizing that projects and workshops held at the absorption centers in the initial stages of absorption are less relevant for olim who have been at the absorption centers for over 2 years, the questions arose of how to help the immigrants at this later stage of their integration too, and what their needs are. The participants in the meeting noted the importance of listening to, and learning from, the viewpoint of the olim themselves, and how the immigrants experienced their absorption process.

In this spirit, the rationale behind the evaluation project is that olim who have already left the absorption center are able to provide the most meaningful insight on the help they received during their stay at the centers and the challenges they encountered after moving to permanent housing, and that these insights can help absorption staff devise better programs and more effectively help future olim with the move.

The research incorporated 64 interviews conducted by the house mothers from all the 16 absorption centers where Ethiopian immigrants are housed after they first arrive in Israel, with families who have been living in permanent housing for 1-4 years, and who have at least one child in an educational institution.

There are a number of limitations to this methodology, although they do not detract from the importance of the findings.

First, the interviewees were not chosen randomly. The house mothers were told by the social workers who led the project to choose “normative,” and even relatively strong, families. This means that the survey may include only a small number of families, if any at all, who have faced problems that are more severe than the average for Ethiopian olim.

Second, one should take into account the fact that the interviews were conducted by house mothers who know the interviewees and supported them for a significant period of time. Some of the replies may, therefore, be somewhat biased, for it is likely that some of the answers took the presumed feelings of the house mothers into consideration. On the other hand, prior familiarity of the parties may offer an advantage, as there would already have been a sense of trust between the interviewees and the interviewers, and no need to build this up during the course of the interview. This trust may have generated openness and cooperation.

The interviews touched on a variety of topics: command of Hebrew, sense of independence and the ability to cope in dealings with government and other offices, and the immigrants' employment situation. The findings have led to the formulation of a series of recommendations to absorption staff for work with immigrants from Ethiopia in the future.

2. Language

Interviewees were asked, “Today, to what extent do you feel you are able to speak Hebrew: to talk to a stranger?” Of the 57 respondents, 16% noted that they have no ability at all, 4% that they have a basic ability, 17% a reasonable ability, 19% a good ability, and 2% a very good ability.

In response to a follow-up question, “Today, to what extent do you feel you can read and write in Hebrew?” of the 33 respondents, 40% reported that they have no ability, 42% that they have a basic ability, 11% that they have a reasonable ability, and 7% that they have a good ability.

These findings reveal that reading and writing proficiency, on all levels, is inferior to the level of speaking. Discussions with the house mothers indicate that the olim have particular difficulties in reading and writing. One of the house mothers, who also worked as a mentor, talked about the great difficulty of teaching adults who do not have writing skills in any language the fine motor skills required for writing. As a result, many of the adults do not learn writing at all, and this generates a sense of frustration which stops many of them from learning Hebrew altogether, including speaking.

These findings beg the question, what is a realistic aim in the acquisition of reading and writing skills in Hebrew for adult olim from Ethiopia, and if the aim is to achieve a higher knowledge of reading and writing by a greater percentage of olim, how can the absorption systems help them acquire these abilities?

3. Sense of Independence

The interviews also sought to gauge the degree to which the olim still feel like new immigrants. Of the 60 respondents, 42% reported that they still feel like new olim, 50% that they no longer feel that, and 8% that they partly feel like new immigrants. From their responses, it is clear that the immigrants see a connection between knowledge of the language and their sense of having integrated, and, by extension, the importance of command of Hebrew for their sense of independence. For example, one respondent, who said she felt like a veteran in Israel, commented: "I talk with my Ashkenazi neighbors, so I feel like a veteran Israeli," while another olah who said she still felt like a new olah, said: "Yes, I feel like an olah because I don't know Hebrew."

Command of the language is a key to independence and social integration. The olim clearly experience difficulties with learning to speak the language, and more so with reading and writing. In the absence of agreed targets and measures, it is not possible to determine the level of success of olim absorption in this area, and where there is room for improvement. Yet olim are experiencing difficulties in this area, difficulties which impact on other areas of life also.

4. Access to Services

The level of command of Hebrew is connected to and impacts on the way in which olim access various services. The difficulties in accessing services are particularly noticeable where health care is concerned.

a. Health Services

In response to the open question: "With which institutions do you, today, have difficulties and why?," 9 respondents said that they have difficulties with their dealings with their Health Maintenance Organization (HMO), noting, for example:

- "It is hard for us to arrange an appointment for treatment with a telephone answering service, so we go there in person to make the appointment."
- Because I have language problems, I find it difficult to explain the exact nature of my problems, and to understand the treatment."

In contrast, when asked, "Do you need translation help in your dealings with the health services?," out of the 66 respondents, 56% reported that they can manage on their own, 15% that they are helped by their children, 12% that they are helped by a mediator, 12% that they are helped by a relative, and 3% that they are helped by a representative of *Tene Briut*, the association developed specifically for that purpose.

While most respondents say they manage on their own, in view of the reported difficulties with language and integration it is possible that the fact that they say they manage on their own does not mean that they experience no difficulties. The questionnaire did not offer the possibility of answering that the interviewee experiences difficulty but does not receive help. The lack of such a response option may have led more olim to answer that they manage on their own. Moreover, as it can be assumed that even if the olim do manage on

their own they still have to cope with difficulties, the question remains of why they do not ask for more assistance from Tene Briut or a mediator.

From a discussion with the house mothers it would seem that so few ask for help with translation in their dealings with the health services because Tene Briut works with only one HMO, because it is difficult to contact them as it is the doctor who has to initiate the contact, and because in some cases when contact is made the service takes more time than the doctor has for that specific patient. One house mother also suggested that the low level of requests for help from mediators is due to the fact that they work only in some towns and some clinics – and even there on a part-time basis only. This information should be conveyed to the responsible parties so that they consider how to provide more extensive help.

b. National Insurance Institute

In response to the open question: “With which institutions do you primarily experience difficulties and why?,” 12 respondents said that they have difficulties in their dealings with the National Insurance Institute:

- “Because of the complicated paperwork.”
- "There was an occasion when I did not receive unemployment benefit for several months. That was because I was unable to explain the nature of my problem so that they could address it.”
- "Because there is no mediator there.”

This raises various questions of how the help provided to Ethiopian olim may be made more effective:

- Can the services provided for Ethiopian olim at the National Insurance Institute be made more accessible?
- Can the documents be made more accessible to them?
- Can they be provided with translating assistance?
- Can the automatic telephone answering service be made more user friendly for them?

c. Welfare Office

One question focused on the support the olim receive from the Welfare Office. Of the 57 respondents, fully 86% reported that they had turned to the office with matters ranging from day care facilities for their children, help with purchasing electrical appliances, dental treatment and the purchase of eye glasses, to the filling out of forms. This shows the scope of help the olim need and, therefore, begs the question of why some olim did not contact the office: was it because they did not need help or because something prevented their contacting the service? Nearly half of those who had contacted the service reported that they received the help they requested.

There are no goals or measures in place to enable the absorption staff to gauge whether the percentage of applicants or the percentage of those who received help are in keeping with

anticipated levels. Moreover, the findings do not provide any tools to understand about those who reported that they did not receive the assistance they requested.

d. Municipal Absorption Help Centers

69% of the 54 respondents reported that they had applied to their local municipal absorption help center. Among the 17 respondents who reported that they had not contacted a local center, 4 noted that there is no such center in the town in which they live.

Those who had contacted the center reported that they had received help on a wide variety of topics:

- “We received a lot of furniture from them.”
- “Recently one of the girls went on a trip arranged by the absorption help center.”
- Health and nutrition workshops, parenting workshops – a connection based on activity, not on assistance.”
- “Translation of documents we received by mail.”
- “Completing the basket of absorption services, and a workshop, with four sessions on parental guidance.”
- “Advanced Hebrew studies.”

About a quarter of those who reported that they had received help noted that they took part in a social activity organized by the absorption help centers and municipal authorities, such as Sigd holiday celebrations, a senior citizens club, trips and activities for children.

e. Support Associations

Only 4 respondents answered in the affirmative to the question, “Do you know of, or have you been helped by, other support associations?” Of them, only 1 specified the name of the association to which he turned, *Latet*.

If the need exists, and the fact that many respondents applied to the municipal absorption help centers and Welfare Office for assistance indicates that it does exist, why did the respondents not contact other support associations? Are they unaware of their existence? Or do they not know which associations can help address different needs? If there a need for further support, how can access to these associations be made easier and more effective?

f. Access to Services: Summary

Accessing services is no simple matter for Ethiopian olim. Their limited command of Hebrew, knowledge of what services exist, and cultural differences, are a serious obstacle to accessing services. In addition, the problem of dealing with paperwork makes it difficult for the olim to submit requests for assistance to the National Insurance Institute.

5. Employment

a. Men

Of 52 respondents, 77% are employed, and 23% unemployed. Of the 40 who were working, 22 were employed in industry, 7 as cleaners, and 11 in other fields.

b. Women

Of 63 respondents, 59% were employed, and 41% unemployed. Of the 37 who were working, 15 worked as cleaners, 5 in a kitchen, 5 were caring for senior citizens or people with disabilities, 4 in hospitals, 4 in supermarkets, 3 in industry. Among the 26 unemployed respondents, 4 were on maternity leave, 1 was of pension age and 4 had health problems.

These findings reveal a very high rate of unemployment among the olim, particularly the women. For the sake of comparison, the national rate of unemployment in the 25-64 age group in February 2016 was 4.6%. Absorption center staff members suggest that the rate of employment may actually be higher than appears from the survey, and that some women are working but did not report that they work.

Yet undoubtedly the rate of employment among the women is lower than the national average, and absorption center house mothers suggest a number of possible explanations for this. Manpower agencies tend to dismiss women if they miss work when one of their children is sick, and there is the problem of traveling early in the morning to work comparatively far away from where they live by public transport, because the women need to prepare their children for their various educational frameworks, wait with them for transport, or accompany them themselves. The difficulty is even greater for single mothers. Furthermore, there are difficulties associated with returning to work following maternity leave.

Yet the rate of unemployment is high, a fact which begs a series of questions:

- Is the preparation and guidance the olim receive in the absorption centers sufficiently effective in helping them enter the employment market?
- How can central government and municipal authorities help reduce the level of unemployment among new olim from Ethiopia?
- What special assistance can be provided for mothers to help them enter and stay in the work force?

The percentages of women who work in cleaning, and of men who work in industry, are high. Does The Jewish Agency have an opinion on this? Has it considered what should be the measure of success of absorption based on the variety in the sectors of the work force in which the olim are employed?

c. How Olim Find Work

Of 58 respondents, 28% reported that they found work through a manpower agency, 26% through the government Employment Bureau, 22% through family and friends, and 19% independently. Far smaller numbers reported that they found work through the municipal absorption help center or the absorption center staff. It is quite possible that some of the respondents who found work through a manpower agency were referred to the agency by the government Employment Bureau.

The findings would seem to indicate the success of the Employment Bureau both in placing Ethiopian olim in work, and in developing strategies to increase the level of employment among this population.

d. Support from Absorption Center Staff

Of 59 respondents, 45 (76%) reported that the absorption center staff helped them find work, help which primarily took the form of referral to manpower agencies, and initial help at the government Employment Bureau. However, only 4 respondents noted that they participated in employment workshops.

This finding contradicts the finding in the previous point about a low number of olim who reported that they were helped by the absorption center staff in finding work. The reason for this could be that a high percentage of olim were helped in finding work while they still lived in the absorption center but are no longer employed in that position, an explanation that suggests that olim encounter difficulties in staying in one job for an extended period of time. This may well be connected to the implications of the transition from the absorption center to permanent housing. The house mothers noted that, while they live at the absorption center, the olim do not pay for day centers, and benefit from greater community support in caring for their children. This makes it easier for the parents to go to work while after they leave the absorption center, and caring for their children becomes more complicated, some of the olim stop working. If this is indeed the case, the possibility of helping the parents with childcare should be examined, so that the parents can continue working.

e. Professional Training

Only 2 respondents reported that they underwent professional training: one did a driving course and the other trained as a cook. Comments made by olim who were interviewed suggest that the obstacle to taking part in professional training is the drop in income and benefits during the training, a finding which prompts the question of how olim can be encouraged to participate in professional training courses that can improve their long-term financial situation.

f. Difficulties Encountered in the Workplace and Workers' Rights

Of 57 respondents, 20% reported that they had experienced difficulties at work relating to salary, rights and responsibilities, but only 2 of them said that they had turned to an organization that provides support – in their case the *Histadrut* (Labor Federation).

One concerning explanation was, “I was afraid of losing my job. I knew to whom I should speak but I wasn’t ready to do that,” a response that raises the question of how the confidence of olim can be boosted so that they do ask for help when needed.

g. Employment: Summary

The interviews indicate that there is a high rate of unemployment among Ethiopian olim, particularly among women. The main fields in which olim work are cleaning (women), and industry (men). Many of those employed found work through manpower agencies or the government Employment Bureau, so that the bureau can be a leading player in developing and implementing approaches to the situation with employment of Ethiopian olim.

The interviews also indicate that few participated in employment workshops at the absorption centers and even fewer attended professional training. This may be due to the need to work less in order to study and train, and the concomitant detrimental effect on income.

It also appears that Ethiopian olim are wary of asking for help when their rights at work are violated. It is important to note that where some of the data are concerned, we are unable to determine whether the findings indicate success or failure, as there are no agreed-upon indices of success.

6. Help from Absorption Center Staff in Adjusting to Life in Israel

Part of the interview focused on learning in which areas the olim judged the absorption center staff to have been most helpful to them.

a. House Mothers

64 respondents detailed the categories of help they received from the absorption center house mothers:

- Follow-up to medical issues – 78%
- Support and assistance – 70%
- Workshops – 70%
- Taking an interest in them – 48%

Several respondents added comments which included warm words for the house mothers:

- “You gave me help that I didn’t get from my own mother. When we came on aliya we missed our village, and when we moved to permanent housing we missed the absorption center.”
- “They said to me [reported a house mother involved in the survey] that, whenever I made a house call, I would encourage them, when it was tough too, and that they would never forget that.”

b. Support Staff

The respondents feel that they benefited from significant support, in different areas, from the absorption center support staff. 64 respondents detailed the categories of help they received:

- Guidance in organizing the house and safety at home – 72%
- Shared her own experiences with me – 53%
- Came with me to offices – 45%
- We enjoyed her visits – 41%

Additional comments made about the support worker expanded on these fields of help:

- “The support worker helped us with all our needs. She especially helped us with cleaning the house, gave us advice about the children’s education, guidance on my relationship with my partner, on the whole subject of health, and about various workshops.”
- “Relationships between couples – strengthening the relationship, family guidance on various topics, such as children’s education, house care and maintenance.”
- “Guidance and support. She also supported me when I was fighting with my husband.”
- “The support worker always took an interest, tried to help me whenever she could, but I was not in a state whereby I could allow anyone to get close to me, or to listen to advice.”

The comments about relationships between the couples indicate the need for support in this area.

c. Counselors

Respondents were also asked to detail those areas in which they received help from the counselors who worked with them in the absorption centers. 64 respondents detailed the categories of help they received:

- Shopping – 58%
- Translating at offices – 52%
- National Insurance Institute – 48%
- Conversion to Judaism – 47%
- Employment – 41%
- Legal aid – 25%

d. Help in Purchasing an Apartment

From comments made by respondents to questions relating to the guidance they received from absorption center staff where the purchase of an apartment is concerned, it would appear that guidance is important in the following areas:

- Examining the area of the town as a factor in considering where to buy.
- Help with registering for schools, after moving to permanent housing.
- Cautionary steps in the process of buying an apartment.

e. Areas Important to the Olim Today

The principal areas that concern the olim today are day-to-day issues such as income and raising and educating children, alongside concern for relatives left behind in Ethiopia. Many said that they send them money, and are waiting for them to come to Israel.

7. Summary and Recommendations

The interviews conducted by the house mothers with the olim who moved to permanent housing generated a large amount of information, and pinpointed knowledge and issues which should be considered when thinking about the absorption process for future olim. Furthermore, the visits made by the house mothers to the olim in their permanent homes

were very meaningful for the olim. They were excited to host the absorption center staff who supported them during their initial integration period in Israel, and felt that the staff members were interested in their experiences and in learning from them how to improve care in the future.

The absorption process is long and complicated, and the oleh experiences it in an all-encompassing manner that impacts on all areas of life. Consideration should therefore be given to how to make support during the absorption process as holistic and comprehensive as possible. Ideally, the approach should be an integrative support process that stretches from preparation in Gondar, through the time living at the absorption center, to the transition to independent living in permanent housing.

For example, the study of Hebrew, one of the biggest challenges for the olim and one that impacts on their absorption on many levels, should start in the center in Gondar, continue, with significant progress, during the initial absorption period in the absorption center, and continue thereafter, when the olim have moved to permanent housing, both through formal lessons and other avenues.

We believe that this research can provide the impetus for discussion and learning which will lead to an improvement in the absorption process of olim in the future. To this end, the discussions should bring together bodies and organizations that support the olim throughout the entire absorption process – Jewish Agency and government officials who are involved in the waiting period in Gondar, Jewish Agency and government officials involved in the period when olim live in absorption centers, representatives of official bodies and non-profit associations that provide assistance after the olim move to permanent housing (local authorities, government Employment Bureau, National Insurance Institute, HMOs, support associations).

This research does not touch on the degree of success of the absorption process, as there are no indices of success, and it would seem that there is a need to develop such indices for such areas as language acquisition, sense of independence and employment. The indices should be developed collectively by all the various bodies involved in the integration of Ethiopian olim, so that there is consensus about what constitutes success and about how to measure it.

a. Recommendations for the Aliyah, Absorption and Special Tasks Unit of The Jewish Agency

- Hebrew-language acquisition: place greater focus on learning Hebrew during the waiting period in Gondar.
- Initiate a discussion with all relevant parties – Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, which is responsible for the ulpan and Hebrew language tuition, Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor, which is responsible for professional training programs, Employment Bureau, local authorities, absorption center staff, private NGOs active in the field – with the aim of creating a more

effective continuum of support from the waiting period in Gondar through to the independent living stage.

- More specifically, a better continuum of support needs to be created during the period of transition from the absorption centers to permanent housing. To this end, a discussion should be held together with the absorption personnel within the municipal governments.
- Examine how it is possible to enable absorption center staff to provide more support for the olim's initial steps in permanent housing, and allocate greater resources to this.
- Determine success indexes for the various areas of the initial stages of the absorption process and conduct actual measuring.
- Further research on such issues as how olim perceive the quality of absorption, and how Israeli society relates to the absorption of Ethiopian olim. Answers to such questions can provide insight that will facilitate the planning of assistance for olim who are still living at absorption centers with their move to permanent housing, and the absorption of other immigrants from Ethiopia who are expected to arrive in the absorption centers.

b. Recommendations for Non-Jewish Agency Parties Connected to Immigrant Absorption (government ministries, municipal absorption authorities, employment services)

i. Language Acquisition

- As the principal challenges of everyday life where command of Hebrew is concerned are the result of difficulty in understanding and speaking Hebrew, how can the absorption systems help the olim attain these skills? It would seem that the Adult Education Wing of the Ministry of Education should consider placing greater emphasis on learning to speak the language, while reducing the attention given to reading and writing, at least in the initial stage.
- A realistic target for all aspects of language acquisition needs to be defined and measures devised to gauge the level of success.
- As much language acquisition happens after the olim leave the absorption centers, continued support for the language acquisition process at the independent housing stage should be examined. Is it possible to develop tools for self-learning which will enable the olim to improve their language skills in their own time?

ii. Access to Services

- The reasons behind the low number of olim who turn to NGO support parties, such as Tene Briut, should be examined.
- National Insurance Institute services for Ethiopian olim should be made more accessible – documents, telephone service and help with translating at the National Insurance offices.

iii. Employment

- Government and municipal authorities should examine ways to reduce unemployment among olim from Ethiopia. If the olim find it difficult to persevere at

their jobs, why is this so? What can be done in order to enable olim to find employment and stay in it for the long term?

- Consideration should be given to helping Ethiopian olim find work in a wider variety of sectors – for example, a number of them have experience from before their immigration in agriculture. Is there potential to help them find work in this field?
- Attention needs to be given to helping Ethiopian olim undergo professional training without the current concomitant reduction in income and benefits. One approach we would suggest is to examine the possibility of providing professional training while the olim are living at the absorption centers, for at that stage the olim receive more support than after the move to permanent housing.