

Good education – accessible to all is the key to individual and social prosperity.

For more than two decades **Hila** has trained and supported parents in Israel to become actively involved in raising their children's academic achievements. By focusing on the socio-economic periphery, **Hila** has placed thousands of children in educational tracks that lead to matriculation and higher education. **Hila** is a grassroots training and advocacy organization dedicated to confronting inequality in the educational system.

February 2013

Dear Friends and Supporters!

The holidays and New Year came and went and we hope it was a nice time for you and your families!

In this newsletter you will be able to read about our successful annual Weekend Seminar in Neve Shalom, an interview with our new manager Danny Admasu and our upcoming advocacy campaign against selection processes to schools.



Thank you all - for your caring support in 2012 - let us look forward with renewed energy and please share our newsletter!

Caroline Freeman, Resource Development Coordinator

Past Activities

Weekend Seminar December, 2012

The seminar focused on 2 issues: *Lack of interaction between the formal curriculum and the culture of the community* - how parents can introduce their heritage into school activities; and *the lack of creative learning in schools and methods to introduce more creative learning, in the core curriculum and extra curriculum hours.*

94 participants took part in the seminar where the largest groups were new Ethiopian immigrants from Ashdod and Rehovot and Arabic parents from Ar'ara, Umm el-Fahm, Kalanswa and Tira.

The seminar had a lecture by **Dr Hagit Goursziv**, Seminar Kibbutsim – an analysis of power relations between school and parent; a panel on "Models of Parental Involvement in School Curriculum" with **Mr Ami Steinitz**, head of Hila's board **Ms. Clara Yonah Meshummar.**, former principal of Kedma school and **Mr Said Yunis**, head of parent committee in Ar'ara; and ended with an interactive workshop by contemporary artist

Mr. Shlomo Vazana discussing the complexity of home culture vs. state culture.

On the Friday evening we held an evening in memory of Tikva Levi where her poems were read in Hebrew, Arabic and Amharic, friends and colleagues spoke of their memories and former Hila activist Li Einstein played Azari violin and sang songs.



We would like to thank the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation and the British Shalom Salaam Trust (BSST) for making this seminar happen!



For Equality in Education

Hila's main activities:

Private consultation to hundreds of parents each year whose children's rights have been violated; **Parent Empowerment Courses** give parents information and practical tools to improve the level of education and diagnose local educational problems; **Weekend seminars** about Educational Equality for Arab and Jewish parent groups; **Publications** in Hebrew, Amharic and Arabic with pertinent, detailed information about the Israeli education system; and **Public Campaigns** which focus on enhancing parents and pupil's rights in education.



An interview with Hila's new General Manager – Danny Admasu

Like many Ethiopian Israelis, I went to boarding school - fortunately it was a good one – this experience of growing up with children from all classes and ethnic groups gave me an opportunity to understand the Israeli society in depth. It also pushed me to get involved and I took part in the student council. Later during my army service I volunteered at the "Youth at Risk Center" in Tel Aviv where I was exposed to the tough world of drop-outs. This in turn led to my job as a Youth Counselor in Haifa and to further roles in the Scouts and the Jewish Agency.

I first heard about Hila in the beginning of 2000, when as a community activist, we did an exhibition about Ethiopian culture and met with Ami Steinitz, the head of Hila's board. After his invitation I took part in Hila's annual weekend seminar and met Tikva Levi and the rest of Hila. In 2006 I decided to dedicate more effort to the Ethiopian community, and joined the "Israeli Association of Ethiopian Jews" as Executive Director. In this position I met Hila's staff at different educational events and referred Ethiopian parents to Hila for consultation. We also had a good partnership in 2008 regarding excessive allocation of Ethiopian pupils to special education frameworks. Soon after that, I joined Hila's general assembly.

In Hila I have found a unique organization, a dedicated team in which everyone has a say and *all* are responsible for the success of the community we serve. The emotional strain of Tikva's passing in August 2012 was very heavy, since she was also a close friend - our main issue

now is to stabilize and focus on our ongoing activities and work.

One of the main challenges these days lies in providing resources for the organization to thrive. I want to ensure that Hila becomes a more well known address to turn to in educational issues because I strongly believe Hila has a unique way of working within the communities that changes the life of people and the future of kids.

New initiative for Corporate Community Involvement!

We will offer Israeli companies lectures for their staff on a number of educational topics, in return for a donation which will be used for courses to parents in the low socioeconomic areas.

Recently I had the opportunity to meet and work with a group of Ethiopian new immigrants in an absorption center near Haifa. It was eye-opening - the parents were starving for knowledge but they are at the same time flooded with other information - learning Hebrew and studying Judaism. However the practical information about the education system that I shared with them, they found very useful as tools to how Israeli society functions in reality. They had a lot of questions, not only about education – I was glad that I could give them *some* answers.

I spent my first 6 years in Israel in an absorption center but it was very different from now. It was easier to interact with the Israeli community than now. I feel that there is an urgent need for new immigrants to get the opportunity to take part in ordinary life in society. They should be encouraged to do so. This I noticed when I gave them an assignment to meet with their children's head teachers. For many it was the first time they visited the school and it was a pleasure to see how they grew from the experience. It is very important that we continue these lectures in more absorption centers.

The people in the absorption centers are just like the people in the development communities who lack the knowledge of how to stand for their rights. This is the essence of Hila's work – conscience raising, opening opportunities and encouraging people to act.



For Equality in Education

Hila's Goals

- A. Empowering parents to become an influencing factor within and for the improvement of the education system
- B. Advancing and developing social and educational projects to improve educational achievements and the expand social involvement
- C. Influencing the Ministry of Education's policy to maintain the rights of parents and children

Current Activities

Pilot course for Ethiopian new immigrants living in Absorption Centers



Aduniya lecturing for 50 parents in Nahariya Absorption center

Recently Hila started a pilot course for new immigrants living in 5 Absorption Centers throughout Israel (Nahariya, Kiryat Yam, Haifa, Beit Alfa and Gilboa) in collaboration with the Jewish Agency.

The courses include 5 meetings and the content is adapted to the needs of new immigrants who spend 1-5 years in the centers before they move out into Israeli society. This means that we concentrate more on understanding how the Israeli education works; instruct parents how to follow up on their children's learning; and create a dialogue between parents and children on school issues. Upon request we also added a workshop on how to deal with adolescence and social pressure.

The pilot has so far been a great success as you can read in the interview with Danny above we hope that we can continue conducting courses in more absorption centers in Israel.

El Bir Women's Group

In Ar'ara our Arabic lawyer Taghrid Shbita, conducted a course in Arabic for a women's group called El Bir. The group of 15 women have come together to deal with all kinds of issues regarding children and family and they are an inspiration to us.

They were very successful in getting involved in schools, 2 of them became members of parent committees and the rest will join parent committees in the next school year. The women also established an internet forum for parents to exchange information where they publish the questions and answers about education from Taghrid.

Thank you Taghrid!

You have opened our eyes to things we were not aware of, now I feel that we have a strong weapon - awareness and knowledge!

Anaan Did, Arara

They are using the knowledge that they have acquired to stand up for their children's rights, for example one mother discovered that her daughter was required to pass 3 exams a week, which is illegal so she printed the relevant general directive from the Ministry of Education on the forum, met with the school principal and demanded the school would follow the rules. She succeeded in reducing the number of exams in the school and is now probably the pupils' favorite mother of the year.



Taghrid Shbita (far right) meeting with the El Bir women.

The women in the El Bir group feel so empowered that they have begun taking private lessons to improve their Hebrew, some have applied to higher education and some are looking for work. We are very proud and will continue to cooperate with the group.



Hila works with Jews and Arabs, Veterans and New Immigrants and for the past 24 years, graduates of our activities have raised academic achievements and improved conditions at schools across the country.

Hila's advocacy has also led to significant improvements on a national level: increased parent rights in special education placement procedures; tighter supervision on dispensation of psychiatric drugs to pupils; and increased transparency in schools.

Hila is unique - it is not sectorial. and works with diverse population groups.

Planned Programs

Public Campaign against Unjust, illegal selection of pupils to schools

Hila is preparing for a public campaign together with the *Ramat Gan Legal Clinic*, *Haifa University Legal Clinic* and *Agenda* against unjust and in some cases illegal selection of pupils to schools. The selection to schools, gives preference to students with high achievements and from better economical backgrounds. It is done by a variation of acceptance tests, interviews and a barrier of extra parent payments.

In January 2013 we published an ad calling parents whose children were discriminated against in this selection process to approach us so we can expose this malpractice.

**הורים - שמים לזה סוף.
מיונים - לא בבית ספרנו !**

הורים מוזמנים לפנות ולהתלונן נגד מיוני קבלה במערכת החינוך, כחלק ממאבק ציבורי בתופעה. אנא כתבו אל: ארגון הלה
info@hila-equal-edu.org.il

**ילדיכם נדרשים לעבור מבחני קבלה? ראיונות?
אינם מתקבלים בשל ציוניהם? מתבקשים להוסיף תשלומים מיוחדים?**

במערכת החינוך קיים מגוון רחב של מיוני קבלה לבתי ספר ולכיתות ייחודיות, שרבים מהם אסורים. שיטת המיונים פסולה מסיבות רבות: היא מייצרת השפלה ופגיעה בילדים - כאשר ילדים נאלצים לעבור הליך מיון וסינון הקובע מי מהם "ראוי" ו"מתאים" למסלול מיוחד ונחשק, הדבר עלול לפגוע בתחושת הערך העצמי שלהם כבני אדם. כמו כן המיונים מגדילים את הפערים בין תלמידים - הם מאפשרים לחלק מהם ליהנות מחינוך משופר בתוך מערכת החינוך הציבורית ובכך מחזקים את האוכלוסיות החזקות ממילא על חשבון השאר.

המרכז הלאומי להגנה על זכויות ילדים
אגודה ישראלית למען החינוך
הלה - למען החינוך
מאגן החינוך

This campaign is done thanks to the support of the Matanel Foundation



Find more information about Hila on our website: www.hila-equal-edu.org.il

Support Hila's Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/hila.equal.edu>

Help us spread the word – share our newsletter!