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# OFIE Program – Hebrew University Program for Underprivileged Youth-2012- 2013

**Name of program**

OFIE Program – Hebrew University Program for Underprivileged Youth

**Year of activity**

2012-2013

**Name of the report's writer**

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**Status of program**

The OFIE program is the social flagship program of the Hebrew university of Jerusalem. The program targets youth 14-18 years old, coming from underprivileged background, most of whom lives in boarding schools throughout Jerusalem, and have weak family support. The program strives to integrate this weakened population with the university community by offering several academic and social services for these youth and boarding schools. These services aim to work as one holistic support system in order to help create self-efficacy, personal and group empowerment and improve academic functioning.

The program includes:

- Personal mentoring: big brother\sister program that creates a beneficiary relationship

between a university student and a single girl or boy.

- Special events: special educational and/or social event designed to break the routine and expand cultural horizons (field trips, visits to museums, cultural events)
- University study groups: an adapted platform through which the youngsters are able to sample the "university experience" by taking classes in various academic fields.
- Volunteering groups: a social group led by 2 students in which the youngsters choose and produce their own community service project.
- One-day seminars for the staff of the boarding schools: an enrichment program given by the university faculty in which we invite the staff we collaborate with to participate in seminars in fields related to their work.

The 2012-13 academic year is the second year of operation in the Hebrew university of Jerusalem of the OFIE program.

This year opened with a total of 364 youth participants in 15 boarding schools throughout Jerusalem. Within the program's different ongoing services we operated 96 pairs of personal mentoring, 12 volunteering groups and 7 study groups. In addition we held 7 special events and 3 seminars.

This activity is conducted by 73 Hebrew university students, who underwent extensive training and preparation before and during their yearly activity. Each student contributed 6 hours per week: 4 hours of activity and 2 hours of training/supervision. The program was led by five university staff members: the program director and four coordinators, each responsible for 15-20 University students.

### **Main achievements during the last year of activity**

- The 2012-13 year concluded most successfully. The year had brought with it many challenges and innovations:
  - The planning and opening of 2 new services – the university study groups and the seminars for staff of the boarding schools. Both of which concluded with great success and positive feedbacks by their participants.
  - Expansion of the other services, which included broadening the scope of our activity in several aspects: 3 more boarding schools in which we operated (15 in total), 25% increase in the number of youth participants, 20% increase in the number of students, 7 special events (in relation to 4 last year).

- The satisfaction of the youth participants this year is evident by the high attendance rate throughout the year, by their feedback in the questionnaire, and by their true commitment to the program, which was realized by strong connection with the students and their interest in the contents of the activity.

The students also described their participation in the OFIE program as a powerful experience, which changed their lives and turned their university studies into a meaningful and influential experience.

- As part of its objectives, the OFIE program aim to expose and increase familiarity of weakened populations and their problems with the Universities community, and thus encouraging students and faculty involvement, both academically and socially. For that end, we constructed an extensive learning program for the students, which include lectures and workshops about major problems and challenges in the Israeli society in general, and those related to youth and education in particular. The program, which became an integral part of

the students activity in OFIE, enriched and deepened their understanding and thought regarding the broader context of their work within the program. In addition, we initiated a volunteering program for the University academic and administrative staff, in which they help and contribute their time in various ways for the youth and the boarding schools.

## **Evaluation**

Since 4 month ago we began a process of evaluative research conducted by a master student in social work. The research goal is to examine the effect of the program intervention on the youth lives, in regard to the quality of the relationships formed between the students and the youth, and the positive change these relationships are able to make. In addition the research wishes to examine the participants level of satisfaction from the activities and the relations between their personal characteristics (age, gender, financial situation, etc.) to the satisfaction rate.

This evaluation is mainly Qualitative in nature. It relies first and foremost on Depth-interviews with youth participants, students and collaborators, and first hand observations. In addition, each participant and student also fill-out a feedback questionnaire, which helps to complete the evaluative picture.

At the end of the school year, students will also be requested to answer a feedback questionnaire summarizing their own work with the OFIE program, the program contribution to them and their youth participants, and their level of satisfaction from their activity and part in OFIE.

Results of this evaluation process are due by the end of July in a report summarizing the results and draws conclusions and recommendations. At this time we shall deliver it to you.

## **Others**

Some of the plans for next year are contingent upon the conclusions and recommendations that will be drawn following the evaluation process, and since it is not yet completed the advancement plans are provisional.

At this point our main objectives for next year are:

1. Expanding and strengthening the University study groups: as stated above, this year we opened 7 university study groups in which we created adapted academic courses for the youth based on a model of active learning. The courses were in three different fields (psychology, business management and political science) and were taught by students learning these fields in their final year of the BA. Due to its great success, Next year we hope to double the size of this program (from 7 to 14 groups and from 70 to 140 participants) and add two new fields of study (law and medicine). In addition we strive to make it possible for participants, after graduating the first year, to take classes for academic credits.
2. Continued deepening and specialization of the existing services: with time we realize that the services we offer are much needed by our target population, but also that we constantly need to learn and acquire understanding in order to adjust and fine tune ourselves to better accommodate those needs. In order to achieve the maximum impact and do the best work we can, we plan to adapt and change some of the activities we offer and to tailor them better to our target population.
3. Continued deepening and specialization of the learning program: as stated above, part of our objectives and operations are directed toward the active students and aim to provide

social and theoretical context to their activity within the program. Here, too, we feel we constantly need to learn and adjust ourselves to the needs of the students and to provide more interesting and suitable contents. As part of this learning process next year we plan to create a different syllabus for those students who will stay on for a second year.

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