

Quarterly report from Hila- for Equality in Education First Quarter, 2012

In the first quarter of 2012 Hila succeeded in reaching our target of supporting parents throughout Israel with educational rights.

Consultation to individuals

Consultation to individuals is divided to 3 types: *simple inquiries*, *consultation cases* and *complicated cases* .

- *Simple inquiries* are people seeking information or clarification about education rules and standards, common issues include: suspending pupils who misbehave, checking if different modes of punishments are legal, how to cope with schools delaying pupils certification because of unpaid parents payments, parents rights during placement procedures, parents rights in front of schools that condition children to take medical treatment, funding transport to remote schools etc.
- *Consultation cases* are families who seek our help in coping with violations of their children's rights. This include helping parents get documents, assessing documents, consolidating a strategy of action, writing letters on behalf of the parents or legal letters in the name of Hila, meeting parents and preparing them for their negotiations or committees, representing parents in front of supervisors and placement committees
- *Complicated cases* are where we escort parents for a year and even up to 2-3 years. These cases usually involve ongoing consultation about dealing with school, involvement of the welfare authorities who sometimes threaten to take custody of the children unless some conditions are met.

In the first quarter 2012 we served 390 parents with simple inquiries, of these 42 were consultation cases. Within these consultation cases 25 were about transferring a child to or from special education. We succeeded in solving 23 of these transfers according to the parents wish.

Example of a successful consultation case this year:

The story of S.D - a 15 year old boy from Or Yehuda

S.D. is from a family of low income in Or Yehuda, his first 7 years in school he attended a special education class since he was diagnosed with severe learning disabilities. In his 8th year his parents got him into a regular class but he had large gaps in his education. The school did not help him but he did start to catch up - however his achievements only reached average.

When S.D. was due to start junior high school he was placed in a specific comprehensive school with a Marine track, after a recommendation from his school. This Marine track – is an education which basically teaches social skills, strengthening self esteem and sailing small boats. At the end of the education the pupil has not achieved any specific skills that will help him/her get an occupation and most importantly it will not lead to a certificate of Matriculation and further studies.

S.D's parents refused to place their son in this track and contacted Hila. With Hila's support they kept the boy at home for an entire month whilst we approached the educational authorities of Or Yehuda and the Inspector of Education demanding that S.D would be placed in a Tellem class. A Tellem class is for students with learning disabilities where they get extra support and tutoring that aim at full matriculation.

After one month of struggle S.D was finally allowed to join the Tellem class. S.D. is now completing 9th grade and has made significant improvements. Through cooperation with Karen Ima we got private tutoring for him and next year he will start high school to complete full matriculation.

Website

The visitors to our website had a high in January of 2,921 unique visitors but February and March saw a small decline to approximately 2,600 visitors. The reason for that is that in January Hila had more media exposure. There were a number of articles in Arabic online media about our work with the municipal parent committee in Ar'ara and Usufiya. In January we also saw media exposure on the English Ynet with an article about Hila's weekend seminar which was held in December 2011 and short Hebrew article about the exhibition in Ashdod.

In February we created a page on the website in Arabic with information and leaflets. The web page has not yet been marketed but we have already seen an interest, in the first month we had 165 visitors to the Arabic page.

Yedioth Ahronoth

Each Friday in the local supplement of "Yedioth Ahronoth" one of Israel's largest newspapers, Hila has a weekly advice column for parents called "Parents Assembly". The column is immensely popular and we have been able to reach parents in areas where Hila previously has not been active. Every week we get phone calls, emails and letters related to the column with more questions that we publish and answer the following week.

Examples of questions are:



Q: What is the maximum number of pupils permitted in a class? What happens if there is 1 more than permitted?

A: In kindergarten the maximum is 35 kids in a class, in grades 1-10 the permitted number of pupils is 40 and in grade 11 and 12 the number is 38. If there are more pupils than permitted, the school must open another class

Q: My son is going to attend a religious junior high school. All religious schools in our area demand thousands of shekels as parent fees for the religious curriculum. How much are they allowed to demand?

A: The Ministry of Education has set the limit to NIS 5000 per child for extra religious curriculum. However, the curriculum must be approved by the Department of Religion at the Ministry. If there are siblings in the same school there should be a reduction and the school must enable parents of low income to apply for lower fees.

Parents improving community

Ethiopian Culture and Heritage Exhibition in Ashdod

In January, over 150 people gathered together in the Ashdod community center for an exhibition called *"Things. Stories. Pictures."* put on by the parent group that Hila has worked with for the last year. The exhibition depicted the rich cultural heritage of the Ethiopian community, telling their stories through cultural items, art, music, dance, and the personal stories of six members of the Ashdod community.



The idea for this exhibition came out of the Ashdod parent group as an event for the Ethiopian community which is located in the heart of the ultra Orthodox neighborhood - and suffers from exclusion and discrimination - to express their rich history and culture. It was a festive evening, enjoyed by all in attendance.

The Ashdod group have started a learning center to help children study after school, conducted a survey to map problems in the community and created strategies to solve them. They have also consolidated and applied to start up an NGO called "A New Era" to promote and strengthen the involvement of the Ethiopian community within the city and in Israeli society more broadly.



The Ethiopian Jewish communities living in Israel continue to struggle against discriminatory employment and housing practices, the questioning of their religious legitimacy, and large gaps in education. Hila works to address these gaps in education in many areas throughout Israel.

In **Ramle** a very tight knit and active group of 22 mothers started a course with Hila's coordinator Aduniya Tarakin. They have identified 4 topics that they wish to delve into:

1. they wish to receive tools to assist them in addressing educational problems.
2. Children with learning disabilities - what other support institutions or aid can the mothers get when they themselves feel insufficient.
3. How can families deal with education when the parents did not go to school or master Hebrew and they feel that there is a large gap between the Ethiopian and Israeli culture.
4. How to deal with teenagers.

In **Arara** Hila is assisting a group first by consulting the school parent committees and helping them hold elections to the municipal committee. After a successful election our legal advisors are giving them ongoing consultation on school budget and how a municipal parent committee functions.

The first quarter in numbers

Hila has given courses and consulted groups of parents in 7 areas in Israel, with a total of 89 participants. Through our private consultation we assisted 390 parents and 6,748 people visited our website. There were 4 articles in written media about Hila and one Radio interview.