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# OFIE Program – Hebrew University Program for Underprivileged Youth-2013- 2014

**Name of program**

OFIE Program – Hebrew University Program for Underprivileged Youth

**Year of activity**

2013-2014

**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, who come from underprivileged background, 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 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 this program, we invite our community collaborators to participate in seminars in fields related to their work.

The 2013-14 academic year is the third year of operation of the OFIE program.

This year opened with a total of 461 youth participants in 13 boarding schools, and 10 schools throughout east and west Jerusalem. Within the program's different ongoing services, we operated 82 pairs of personal mentoring, 16 volunteering groups, and 28 study groups. In addition we held 4 special events and 3 seminars.

This activity is conducted by 83 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 six university staff members: the program director and five coordinators, each responsible for 15-20 University students.

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

- The 2013-14 year concluded most successfully. The year had brought with it many challenges and innovations:
  - After a pilot year, we operated the University study groups for the first time in its full scope. The study groups were composed of 300 youth participants, who arrived in the campus once a week, to learn an enrichment class in one of these academic fields: medicine, business, law, psychology or social science. The program had also opened its gates (for the first time) to Arab youth who live in the eastern part of Jerusalem.
  - We've extended our other services, including broadening the scope of our activity in several aspects: 6 more schools in which we operated (22 in total), 25% increase in the number of youth participants, 20% increase in the number of students.
- 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 to the Universities community, and thus encourage students and faculty social involvement, both academically and socially. For that end, we constructed an extensive learning program for the students, which includes 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 student's 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**

4 month ago we began a process of evaluative research conducted by a master student in social work. Last year the research focused on the effect of the program intervention on the youth lives. This year, our goal is to evaluate the affect the program experience has on the students who operate in it. As stated above, in addition to their activity with the youth, the students undergo a learning and training process. Our goal with this research is to examine the level and quality of the professional tools we provide our students, and also to monitor their change in attitude toward social issues related to the program.

Our evaluation process is mainly Qualitative in nature. It relies first and foremost on Depth-interviews with the students and collaborators, and first hand observations. In addition, each student fills 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 personal process with the OFIE program, the program contribution to them, 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 which will summarize the results and draws conclusions and recommendations. At this time we shall deliver it to you.

## **Others**

Provisional guide lines for the advancement of the program in the next year:

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. Opening a life skills and employment program: since the youth in the boarding schools finish their stay there when they reach the age of 18, we realized that a pressing need is to impart them with life skills such as prudent economic Self-management, life choices and especially employment. For that reason we aim to create a program that will bestow such skills by learning and experience. the program will include groups of 17 year old youngsters who are about to graduate from the boarding school. Its goal will be to give knowledge about such issues and also receive employment experience in designated business that will support them in their first steps. The groups will be led by two students who will be responsible for the activity in the group, teaching the life skills subjects and providing personal mentoring directed to the employment world.

2. Opening an Arts program: one objective that every young person need to accomplish is building his identity and individuality. Youth at risk are no different and one activity that enables them to do so with great success and feeling of satisfaction is art. Since many of the students we work with has different talents such as music, theater, painting, cinema, photography, etc, and since the youth we work with doesn't have the financial resources to enroll in youth centers which provide such activities, we decided to harness these students to create activities to our youth that will use art to enrich their lives and build their personalities.

The activities will take place in the boarding schools and each of these groups will conclude with a presentation of a play, exhibition, movie, and so on.

3. 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.

4. 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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