



MATANEL FOUNDATION

ACTIVITY REPORT

Program: Mahder

Years: 2024–2026

Name of the Program: Mahder (מובילות), meaning “Trailblazers” in English.

Years of Activity: 2024–2026

Name of the Report Writer: Mamar Mandefro

Position of the Report Writer: Project Manager

Email: funds@nacoelj.org.il

Phone: 08-6500450

Website / Facebook Address of the Organization:

Website:

<https://www.nacoelj.org.il/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/nacoelj>

Number of Active Participants in the Program: 15

Estimated Number of Participants Impacted: 15

Current Status of the Program

The two-year training program, designed to provide culturally adapted social work interventions, is nearing its successful conclusion, with an average participant retention rate of approximately 90%.

The participants in this inaugural cohort are experienced social workers, all of whom hold Master's degrees and have undertaken advanced, specialized professional training. The program was conducted alongside the participants' ongoing studies at their respective academic institutions.

Five intensive training sessions have been completed. The fifth session took place on July 15 at the Ministry of Education offices in Tel Aviv and was facilitated by Wuste tsega

In addition to the five training sessions, a residential weekend seminar will be held in the coming months. The seminar will include workshops and lectures aimed at



deepening the participants' familiarity with mental health, Ethiopian culture, and the relationship between culture and therapeutic practice.

Main Achievements During the Last Year of Activity

On Wednesday (July 15), Cohort A of the Mahder program was successfully completed with the fifth and concluding training seminar. This moving event was held in the presence of the program's initiators and key partners – NACOEJ, the Ministry of Social Security, and the “Wuste Tsega” Center – as well as a representative of the “Matanel Foundation.”

During the meeting, certificates were awarded for participation in the training on culturally adapted psychotherapy, delivered as part of the Mahder program for the social workers, who completed a comprehensive two-year training track and are now entering the field as certified and essential therapeutic professionals providing culturally adapted psychotherapy.

This significant achievement clearly illustrates the profound impact of the program, particularly at this time, when there is a growing need for professional practitioners capable of providing accessible, culturally adapted support to all those seeking help.

During the military conflict with Iran, we initiated an ad hoc project intended to make essential information more accessible and culturally relevant to the Ethiopian-Israeli community.

Within this framework, we held professional working meetings and collected relevant materials. However, the fighting ended before the project could be implemented in practice.

The experience highlighted the broader need to develop clear, culturally adapted, and digitally accessible information for members of the Ethiopian-Israeli community. We are therefore examining how professional content can be converted into short, accessible videos that could be used in different situations, including emergencies, mental health support, and community outreach.

Alongside this initiative, the program participants took part in professional training sessions throughout the year. The fourth session was particularly moving and distinctive. During the session, participants openly shared personal experiences of the difficult journey through Sudan and the hardships that some of them had endured.

As the Memorial Day for Ethiopian Jews Who Perished on Their Way to Israel was observed the following day, the participants marked the occasion by lighting memorial candles and reading meaningful literary passages, as shown in the attached photographs.



Evaluation

The evaluation of the program is based primarily on verbal feedback received from participants throughout the training process.

Participants expressed a clear need for additional time to process the professional and personal content discussed during the sessions. They noted that the current training days, which run from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM, do not always provide sufficient time for deeper discussion, reflection, and the full integration of the material.

In response to this feedback, a residential weekend seminar will be held in the coming months. The seminar will provide a more concentrated learning environment and will include workshops and lectures on mental health, Ethiopian culture, culturally adapted therapeutic approaches, and the connection between cultural identity and professional practice.

The weekend format is expected to enable deeper dialogue, strengthen relationships among the participants, and expand their professional knowledge. Its implementation will also allow us to assess whether this format should be incorporated into future cohorts of the program.

Provisional Guidelines for the Advancement of the Program in the Next Year

We are currently holding discussions with our partners to explore the possibility of launching a second cohort of the program.

This option is being considered in light of the numerous inquiries we have received and the clear and consistent need identified in the field. There is an acute shortage of qualified therapists who have the knowledge and skills required to provide culturally sensitive and adapted care, particularly for members of the Ethiopian-Israeli community.

The experience gained from the first cohort, including participant feedback and the planned residential weekend seminar, will inform the structure and professional content of a possible second cohort.

We are full of hope and prayer to see the graduates of the first cohort lead the much-needed change in the field, and we wish them great success in their continued professional journey.

With that same hope, we look forward to welcoming the participants of a second cohort and wish them equal success on the path ahead.

