

Ethiopian National Project: Evaluation of the Impact of the Scholastic Assistance Program on Achievements, 2008-2010

The Ethiopian National Project (ENP) is a unique partnership between the Jewish Federation of North America, the Government of Israel, representatives of Ethiopian-Israeli community organizations, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Israel and Keren Hayesod-UIA. It focuses on Ethiopian-Israeli students in junior high and high schools (grades 7-12) and is designed to improve their achievements and reduce the gap between them and non-Ethiopian students, with a special emphasis on matriculation exams. To address these goals, the program provides scholastic, emotional and social interventions based on a culturally sensitive approach that addresses their unique needs.

The current report is part of a comprehensive evaluation carried out since 2006. This new report is particularly important because for the first time we are able to present data for a significant number of schools which have participated in the program for at least three years (2008-2010). In order to estimate the program's impact, we compared the progress in the achievements of the 12th graders who participated in the program at each year to the progress in the same years of two comparison groups: *non-Ethiopian* students who study at the *same schools*, and *Ethiopian-Israeli* students with *similar characteristics in similar schools*, who did not participate in the program. We also examined the work carried out by the program to advance junior high school students to higher study tracks in English and math.

Overall, the findings are very positive and indicate that the program has had a major impact on the eligibility for a matriculation certificate among the Ethiopian-Israeli participants as well as for a matriculation certificate that meets university admission criteria, and on narrowing the gaps between their achievements and those of the non-Ethiopian students. The greater the number of years that the students were exposed to the program (i.e., they started receiving assistance in lower classes), the greater was the impact of the program. Moreover, the impact was particularly evident among the students with the lowest achievements in previous 8th grade achievement tests. These benefits are in addition to the contribution the program has made to the students' wellbeing and achievements throughout their years in junior high and high school, as found in earlier stages of the study.

The program has not yet reached its full potential. It was only in the last academic year that students who had received assistance through the program from the beginning of junior high school graduated from high school. Moreover, only 22% of the students in grades 7-12 participated in the program in 2011/12 and a somewhat higher percentage in 2007/8. As more students will reach the 12th grade after having begun the program in junior high school and if it will be possible to expand the program in the years ahead to include a higher percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli students, we expect it will be possible to further reduce the gaps between the achievements of Ethiopian-Israeli students as a whole and of those of all Jewish students.

The study findings are serving as a basis for ongoing efforts to improve the program and expand its dissemination.

The study was initiated and funded by the Ethiopian National Project.

Ethiopian National Project: Evaluation of the Impact of the Scholastic Assistance Program on Achievements, 2008-2010; Authors: Dalia Ben-Rabi, Ruth Baruj-Kovarsky, Viacheslav Konstantinov; RR-621-13 (June 2013); 32 pp., Hebrew; Cost: NIS 20/\$10. Please use form on reverse side. The report is also available on the Institute website.