

A STORY OF MIRACLES

The aliyah and resettlement of Ethiopian Jewry is miraculous, but for the story to be complete, hard work and strategic investment in educational programs and risk prevention must take place. The **Ethiopian National Project's (ENP)** educational programs engender this transformation so that the community can thrive ■ Grace Rodnitzki



ENP organizes afterschool enrichment activities for children from the Ethiopian-Israeli community

The Jewish community in Ethiopia, cut off from global Jewry, maintained its Jewish identity and remained intact for over two millennia. Given the first opportunity to return to their Jewish homeland, they did so, en masse. North American Jewry played an extraordinary role. Today, many North American Federations continue to ensure the successful integration of Ethiopian Jewry in Israel, which numbers more than 130,000 today, thanks to supplemental support to ENP.

Ensuring a diverse, thriving Israel

■ **Working in partnership:** ENP is the only organization working to benefit the Ethiopian-Israeli community in a full, formal partnership between the Israeli Government, Diaspora Jewry (through the Federations, the Jewish Agency for Israel, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Israel and Keren Hayesod-UIA) and the Ethiopian-Israeli community itself.

■ **A grassroots approach:** Prior to ENP's creation, Ethiopian-Israelis were merely beneficiaries of programming, and did not take a leading role in the execution, creation or oversight of the programs being carried out. Through ENP, for the very first time and singularly, Ethiopian-Israelis play a leading role in program success, from the highest echelons of the organization to the most grassroots level, through staff, committees and involvement of parents and community leaders.

■ **Holistic interventions:** ENP has created a holistic approach that addresses the myriad obstacles to success, thereby overcoming them.

■ **Participant by participant:** ENP places the highest value on mapping, collection and utilization of all possible data and statistics to create the most accurate picture of

the current status and needs of the community. Each city population is mapped, and each program participant is mapped to the most detailed level.

■ **Measured, tested and proven:** ENP sets measurable objectives which are reviewed through internal and external evaluations. ENP constantly learns from annual evaluations to adjust programming, integrating best practices to ensure consecutive successes, constant improvement and achievement of its goals. As a result, participating youngsters have nearly achieved the same scholastic levels as their other Jewish peers, while participating females have surpassed their female Jewish peers' performance.

Transformative impact

Two flagship programs help the community to tap its full potential: ENP's Scholastic Assistance Programs, including SPACE and ENP-Pre-Atidim, take concrete action to lessen educational gaps, and ENP's Youth Outreach Centers, staffed by young Ethiopian-Israeli university graduates who serve as role models, give youth opportunities to discover their skills, talents and passions. Parents are actively involved, ensuring a communal response and transformation. In 2012-13, ENP served 4,500 participants in its Scholastic Assistance programs and operated 19 Youth Outreach Centers. In the 2014-15 school year, with increased support from Federations and the Israeli Government, ENP aims to reach 12,000 children.

For participants in ENP's work, the impact has been transformative. When Bracha was in 9th grade, her mother passed away. As a result, Bracha's grades plummeted and she was placed in a lower performing vocational school, essentially eliminating her possibility of entering university. But ENP, having accompanied Bracha since the 7th grade, understood her great potential, her ability to overcome this tragedy and to excel once again.

ENP staff "cut a deal" with one of the city's outstanding matriculation-awarding schools: if Bracha does well on three key examinations in the 10th grade, she will enter that new school in the 11th grade – an impossibility in a typically immobile placement. Indeed, with ENP's intensive scholastic assistance, encouragement, and the social and emotional embrace Bracha received, she returned to her former performance levels and was able to get back on track. Today, Bracha has graduated with a full matriculation certificate allowing her entrance to university, and is serving in an elite army unit as a police officer.

There are nearly 18,000 Ethiopian-Israeli teenagers, many of whom, like Bracha, need an extra hand to reach their potential. ENP, with support from North American Jewry, is providing that helping hand. ■

For more information about ENP, go to: www.enp.org.il