Quarterly Report to the Hand in Hand Executive Committee and the AFHIH Board

October 2020

(June to September 2020)

Main Developments at the Start of the School Year

* We are in the process of opening a new bilingual preschool in Kafr Kassem, for children from Kafr Kassem and neighboring Rosh Ha’ayin to learn and play together. Unfortunately, at the start of the school year, Kafr Kassem was declared a “red city” in terms of corona infections and, as a result, we were unable to begin operating the preschool on time. Still, we were pleased that, despite the preschool not opening at the start of the year in Kafr Kassem, no membership was lost from the core group of parents from both localities whose passion and energy, together with guidance and close assistance from our Association, had propelled the project forward over the past year. The families held joint community activities instead of the preschool’s regular activity as long as they were able to do so in accordance with the government’s coronoa-related regulations.
* Our school in Beit Berl finally received certification of its “recognized and official” status. We still have to go through an additional procedural process and we are confident that we will be successful in this endeavor. This welcome certification also means that the Ministry of Education has recognized an additional bilingual school, a matter that has considerable budgetary and organizational implications.
* Municipal authorities are beginning to learn, understand, and appreciate the bilingual model and its importance for their towns. As a result, we are currently entering into various kinds of partnerships with the municipalities of Tel Aviv-Yafo and Nof HaGalil, including launching a stewarding program for mixed schools (Jews and Arabs) in Yafo that do not belong to the Hand in Hand system. In conjunction with the municipality of Tel Aviv-Yafo, these preschools are receiving multicultural instructional and language lessons from Hand in Hand instructors. A similar program has been launched in Nof HaGalil, where a mixed preschool will receive direction and multicultural and bilingual guidance from Hand in Hand instructors.
* With the addition of the new preschool in Kafr Kassem and the growth of our existing schools, we will have over 2,000 pupils in all Hand in Hand institutions in the coming school year, along with the addition of more than 300 pupils in supplemental settings of support and guidance.

Additional aspects of our development and growth this year include:

* Completion of a syllabus for teaching Arabic as a second language in grades 1–6;
* Development of a syllabus for a preschool multicultural curriculum on holidays;
* Efforts by our post-primary development team to ensure the growth of bilingual post-primary schools in Jerusalem in addition to the one already operating;
* Progress toward creating a written model for the establishment of a bilingual community;
* Ongoing community work based on our accrued experience and knowledge;
* Continued cooperation with the teacher-training program at the Hebrew University, for our course on bilingual and multicultural education that we have been offering at our school in Jerusalem.
* Our Communities Division will continue this year, as before, to organize activities that comply with the Ministry of Health’s guidelines on limiting large gatherings during the coronavirus era. Where necessary, it will find creative ways of generating fraternity and community partnership even when mass events are not allowed to take place. The division will also continue to develop our alumni program, a forum comprising over sixty people. And, of course, the online series *Mishmish*, created by alumni and produced by the Association, will continue for another season, and will be packed withsurprises. (All episodes of Season 1 of *Mishmish* may be viewed by clicking on this link: \_\_\_\_.)

**We have three new principals in our schools:**

* Joheineh Dakhwar Salim, principal of the primary school in Jerusalem;
* Yuval Oz, principal of preschools and the school in Beit Berl;
* Joheineh Safi, replacing Iris Giller-Klein as principal of the primary school in Haifa for the coming year while Iris is on sabbatical.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name of Institution** | **Enrollment (N)** |
| **Jerusalem** | **686** |
| Preschools | 125 |
| Primary | 318 |
| Junior high | 130 |
| Senior high | 113 |
| **Galilee (primary schools only)** | **297** |
| **Bridge on the Wadi** | 223 |
| Preschools | 34 |
| Primary | 189 |
| **Haifa** | **232** |
| Preschools | 103 |
| Primary | 128 |
| **Yafo** | **536** |
| Preschools | 174 |
| Primary | 362 |
| **Beit Berl** | **117** |
| Preschools | 34 |
| Primary | 74 |
| **Kafr Kassem (preschool only)** | **17** |
| **Total in all Hand in Hand Institutions** | **2,111** |

A. Coping with the Coronavirus Crisis

Israel exited the first corona-related lockdown over the course of June and started the school year in September as usual, with the exception of several “red cities.” However, on September 17, the government decided to impose an additional general lockdown, again shutting down the educational system nationwide.

* **Schools:** All Hand in Hand educational institutions opened on September 1, 2020, as did the educational system at large, with the exception of the preschool in Kafr Kassem, due to Kafr Kassem having been designated a “red city.” When the lockdown began and the educational system switched to distance learning, the Hand in Hand institutions did the same. This is still, of course, a limited format of scholastic activity. We are doing our best to maintain a semblance of routine studies even under these circumstances, with a strong emphasis on maintaining contact with the pupils both scholastically and emotionally. The coronavirus crisis and the paralysis that it is causing in the educational system are delaying the inauguration of our program in Nof HaGalil.
* **Communities:** Giventhe reality of social isolation and the need to shelter at home, our community activity has gone online and includes: panel discussions on various topics; encounters and dialogue sessions with Knesset members and other interesting personalities; language lessons; courses through the *Madrasa* program; film screenings followed by discussions; cooking lessons; and bilingual yoga, to name only a few. Some of these programs will continue online, at least partially, even after the crisis ends. In addition, members of the communities themselves, with support from the Communities team, initiated and activated a support fund for families in Hand in Hand communities who are struggling to cope financially during this period. The principal of the fund was raised by crowdsourcing among members of our communities throughout Israel. We are building community activity for this year based on the assumption that restrictions on mass social events will remain in effect.
* **Economic impact:** Our institutions, like many others, have suffered financially as a result of this crisis. During the first lockdown, although we were able to save on some expenses, due to the cessation of studies, we were still compelled to cut back by placing some Association staff on unpaid leave (thus enabling them to qualify for state unemployment benefits) and downsizing the positions of others. After the first lockdown was lifted, we resumed normal operations in June but, unfortunately, we again had to place staff on unpaid leave when the second lockdown began. Over the course of the next few weeks, we will decide how to continue coping with the situation according to developments in the country. One of the major uncertainties we currently face is our ability to determine and collect payments from parents in light of the Ministry of Education placing limitations on these payments and of the system functioning on such a partial basis.
* **Fundraising:** Since early summer, we have been working systematically to maintain contact with our active donors through individualized efforts that will continue in the coming year. We are also developing creative alternatives to donor visits to our schools in Israel and personal meetings during visits to the United States, neither of which are possible for the time being due to the coronavirus crisis.

B. Schools and Municipalities

Galilee (302 pupils, grades 1–6)

* For the first time in the history of the school, enrollment has broken through the 300-pupil barrier, and an eleventh class was opened (until now, the school had 9-10 classes).
* At the beginning of September, the fifth-graders moved to other buildings in Kibbutz Ashbel, where the school is located, in order to facilitate the “pod” teaching required by the corona regulations.
* As part of the development of project-based learning at this school, an area in the main building called Maker Space was dedicated at the beginning of the school year. The venue features sophisticated technological equipment such as 3D printers, laser cutting instruments, and additional tools to help students perform programming and technology tasks.

Haifa (230 pupils, preschools and grades 1–5)

* The principal, Iris Giller-Klein, went on sabbatical this year and Joheineh Safi, who has overseen the dialogue team until now, will act as principal for this year. Joheineh brings to the job many years of experience at Hand in Hand and other venues of informal education and cooperative social action.
* Enrollment has grown from 80 to 130 this year due to a strong focus on expanding existing classes and enrolling new pupils in first grade.
* At the preschools, we have successfully established a “coronavirus routine” between interruptions of studies. The teachers have been making supreme efforts to maintain the routine even when some of them had to go into isolation for short periods of time.

Bridge on the Wadi (235 pupils, preschools and grades 1–6)

* Over the summer, much effort was invested in improving the school’s appearance: play facilities for young children were installed, much of the school building was repainted, and a community garden was set up.
* The school administration is spearheading a pedagogical overhaul with support from Iris Giller-Klein, principal of the primary school in Haifa, who is on partial sabbatical. This process will continue over the coming year. Our goals for this process are driven by our conviction that this change will significantly improve the quality of education at the school, which will help boost its enrollment.

Jaffa (520 pupils, preschools and grades 1–5)

* After nine years of growth at our school in Jaffa, this year marks the first time that we have opened a school year with a full range of classes from pre-kindergarten (ages 3–4) through sixth grade.
* Sharon and Sigalit are beginning their second and third years (respectively) in Jaffa: Sharon as principal of the school and Sigalit as principal of the preschools. Their collaboration is reflected in many ways, including engaging in an ongoing dialogue about pupils who have completed kindergarten and advanced to the first grade, organizing joint festival events for the preschools and the school, and more.
* The current school year began with downscaled staffs at the schools, after streamlining the preschools’ working model in order to be more economical without impairing the quality of education. We also engaged in acitvities in eight multicultural preschools in Yafo that do not belong to the Hand in Hand system through our launch of a preschool guidance program. As part of our cooperation with the municipality of Tel Aviv-Yafo, these preschools will receive guidance in multiculturalism and language lessons from Hand in Hand instructors.

Jerusalem (686 pupils, preschools and grades 1–12)

* Joheineh Salim Dashwar was chosen to replace Rane Sha’ar as principal of the primary school. Rane had held the post for the past two years.
* After two years of challenges at the primary school, we are confident that Joheineh’s assumption of the post will improve the school’s pedagogical program as well as its relations with the parent committee. These steps will help restore the school’s once long-standing stature as a leading bilingual and multicultural educational institution that promotes values of democracy and active citizenship.
* The high school in Jerusalem: Since the beginning of the school year, twenty-seven teachers have gone into isolation after one teacher was found to have been infected with the coronavirus. Many pupils have also gone into isolation and some have contracted the virus, although probably not from the infected teacher, but from outside the school. The school continues to maintain a full schedule of distance studies and holds cultural events once a week to break up the routine and offer enrichment.

Beit Berl (117 pupils, preschools and grades 1–3)

* Yuval Oz took over from Yael Sadeh as principal of the school. Yuval has amassed considerable experience as a principal at democratic schools and, in his most recent post, expanded a school from merely first grade classes to a full six-year primary school. He is following Yael’s lead in matters related to a humanistic educational approach and, like her, believes in the importance of bilingual and multicultural education and personal mentoring.
* The school finally received certification as a “recognized and official” institution. There remains a procedural process that we must complete, but we are confident that the school will pass it successfully. This welcome news means that the Ministry of Education has recognized another bilingual school, a decision that has considerable budgetary and organizational implications.

Kafr Kassem–Rosh Ha’ayin (17 pupils)

* We are now in the process of opening a bilingual preschool that will receive children from these two neighboring localities. Unfortunately, Kafr Kassem was declared a “red city” when the school year began, making it impossible to inaugurate the preschool on time. Still, we were pleased that, despite the preschool not opening at the start of the year in Kafr Kassem, no membership was lost in the core group of parents from both localities whose passion and energy, together with guidance and close assistance from our Association, had propelled the project forward over the past year. The families held joint community activities instead of the preschool’s regular activity as long as they were able to do so, in accordance with the government’s coronoa-related regulations.

Nof HaGalil (onset of activity planned for September 2020)

* In March, we held a very positive and productive meeting with the mayor and the director general of the municipality of Nof HaGalil. It was agreed that during the current school year, Hand in Hand instructors would provide multicultural and bilingual instructional guidance in a mixed preschool in this town that is jointly attended by Jews and Arabs. The program has been stalled by the coronavirus crisis, and we are hopeful that we can begin our work once the preschools open up.

C. Pedagogical Activity

* **Pedagogical guidance:** During the second lockdown, as during the first, the country’s educational system has been shut down. Our team of instructors is continuing to provide the teaching teams with daily support in coping with the challenges of distance learning. We are investing serious thought and providing meaningful and focused guidance in order to maintain effective small-group learning that can be flexible and responsive to varying needs among the pupils.
* **Development of pedagogical materials:** Our team of instructors is helping to put together online lessons and tailored assignments that respond to the uniqueness of multicultural and bilingual schools, within the context of the educational system that is prepared to respond to each group individually without regard to its bilingual and multicultural nature. In addition, we are near completion of a curriculum for Arabic as a second language for grades 1–4. This curriculum will help the teams going forward, in particular as long as distance learning is necessary.
* The preschool instructional team is continuing to progress toward completion of a program on holidays for preschoolers to be distributed in both languages. Our Hand in Hand teaching teams are already using parts of it.
* Our team of instructors and principals is working to improve social relations among pupils in view of the current situation. In conjunction with principals and instructors in the schools, comprehensive programs are being introduced that will improve the students’ social activity, with an emphasis on strengthening relations between Palestinian and Jewish pupils in the shadow of the lockdown.
* Encouraging pupils’ initiatives and activities: The team of instructors wishes to encourage creative initiatives and ideas that pupils themselves devise as active partners in the learning process: producing a school newspaper, social activities on Zoom, making video films, and research, study, involvement in, and sharing of various contents with other pupils.
* Principals’ Forum: Nadia Kanaani and Danny Elazar held in-person meetings with the principals before the lockdown to hear about the challenges they were facing in opening the school year under the cloud of the coronavirus and its restrictions, and to determine together what they and their schools needed. One of the main goals of the forum this year is to address issues and dilemmas that the principals raise as they cope with the current situation. Another is to ensure that the forum will be a welcoming place for sharing, consultation, brainstorming, peer learning, and ongoing support.

D. Community and Alumni Activity

* **Opening a preschool in Kafr Kassem:** When the new preschool in Kafr Kassem was opened, a new community comprised of sixteen families in Rosh Ha’ayin and Kafr Kassem came into being as well. In the second half of August, we held three getting acquainted sessions with the families, which were followed by the inauguration of the preschool and community activities on September 1. The latter events took place in the Rosh Ha’ayin forest because Kafr Kassem was under lockdown and its educational system was not functioning. In September, we managed to hold three weekly community meetings for the families until the nationwide lockdown began. We are waiting for the lockdown to end in order to reinstate the activity to the extent permissible according to the Ministry of Health guidelines.
* **Producing a written Hand in Hand community model:** In July, we began writing our community model. After eight years of community work, we feel that we have amassed enough experience, success, and insights, and have created enough well-established community activities and structures to be able to articulate a systematic model for the establishment, management, and expansion of a bilingual community. The writing of this document, led by Shuli Dichter, will continue until late December and will include talks with members of the community, partners, and Association staff who are involved in the community endeavor.
* **Alumni Forum:** In early September, we held a seminar with the leading group of fifteen members of the Hand in Hand Alumni Forum. They spent two days discussing their vision and goals and split into three working teams for action in the forum’s main tasks this year.

Community Activities that the Division is organizing for the Current Lockdown

* **Series of encounters modeled after TED lectures:** We are organizing 45-minute Zoom meetings in which the public is invited to meet representatives of the various Hand in Hand communities. The community representatives describe the paths they took to their shared community and answer questions from the public.
* **In-service activity on activism for members of Hand in Hand communities:** There will be a total of eight such encounters, including enrichment activities and practical workshops for five to eight representatives of each community who have the potential of becoming agents of change, and who demonstrate a spirit of inquiry and a desire to influence and change reality.
* **Series of events patterned after political parlor talks for members of the communities:** We will be holding Zoom sessions that focus on discourse over outstanding current debates and topics that are not necessarily related to Jewish–Arab relations, exposing participants to issues and struggles that they are facing, and offering possible learning opportunities.
* **Ongoing activity of the relief fund:** During the first lockdown, a fund for economic and food relief was established for members of the Hand in Hand communities. This fund continues to be active now during the current lockdown. A support platform for businesses and services owned by members of Hand in Hand communities is also under construction, to be called HANDINHAND MADE.

E. Media Activity

* **June 20:** On the Hebrew/Arabic Facebook pages of the Association and of the Hand in Hand high school in Jerusalem, a several-weeks-long Facebook campaign was launched on the occasion of the high school’s tenth-anniversary festivities. The campaign consisted of dozens of profiles of alumni Jews and Arabs, who reported on their activities in life, where they went to university, the career paths they followed, and how the school helped to shape them as socially aware adults;
* **July 28:** Kuds Ayoub, a ninth-grader at our school in Jerusalem, won the *Short Story Prize*for youth organized by the Arabic Culture Association in Haifa! Her story, chosen from more than 100 stories submitted by Arab youth countrywide, is now published on the Palestinian-Israeli news site *Arab 48*.
* **August 19**: A new episode in the *Mishmish* online series,created by alumni of theHand in Hand schools, appears on the Association’s Facebook page and has received 60,000 views. The episode deals with Israeli and Palestinian culture in Haifa and northern Israel and is eight minutes long. It also appears in “Ha-zira,” the bilingual section of the *Ha’aretz* web site. To watch all episodes of *Mishmish,* click on the link: \_\_\_\_.
* **August 26**: A series of programs entitled “The Language Barrier,” which examines why so few Jews in Israel speak Arabic, were broadcast on the Israeli television channel Kan. In its first episode, two Jewish students from our school in Haifa were interviewed as examples of how few Jews speak Arabic, and showoing how important this issue is, and how much it contributes to Jewish–Arab relations in Israel.

F. Fundraising

(See Appendix at the end of this report)

In June, the AFHIH board resolved to establish a joint committee comprised of representatives from the AFHIH board and the Israeli Executive Committee to help the fundraising efforts during this challenging period. The committee met with members of the Association’s fundraising division in June and again in late September. Between these two meetings, the fundraising division carried out a study comparing Hand in Hand’s fundraising efforts to those of other organizations in Israel during this period. The committee is an important and welcome step that may considerably advance Hand in Hand’s fundraising abilities, increasing the likelihood of meeting our annual fundraising targets during and after the coronavirus crisis. The committee will also take up the question of fundraising in Israel.

G. Staff and Administration

Finance

* The Executive Committee approved the Hand in Hand budget for 2020/2021 (see attached).
* The Executive Committee approved the Hand in Hand financial statements for 2019 (see attached).

Hiring and Internal Turnover

* **Leah Beinhacker** replaced Rivka Bardah, who had worked for the Association for nearly a decade, as Director of Resource Development and Strategy.
* **Nadia Kanaani** replaced Inas Dib, who had worked for the Association for more than a decade, as Director of the Education Division.
* **Iris Giller-Klein** applied for asabbatical from her post as the principal of our school in Haifa. She has taken a semi-sabbatical and will lead the pedagogical overhaul of the Bridge on the Wadi school this year. Joheineh Safi was appointed to serve in her position during her sabbatical.
* **Yuval Oz** was hired as principal of the preschools and primary school in Beit Berl, replacing Yael Sadeh, who had held this post for the past two years and has returned to her previous position as pedagogical instructor. She will join the team that is stewarding the preschool in Nof HaGalil.
* **Asher Kleinhaus** completed his term as superintendent of post-primary schools for the Association. We are currently seeking a successor.
* **Two preschool teachers and two aides** were hired and trained for the new preschool in Kafr Kassem. We are now recruiting a community organizer.
* **The downsizing of staff at the preschools in Jaffa,** in accordance with the new organizational and budgetary model, has been completed. The process was implemented with great sensitivity to all those affected, and those winding up their service at the preschools were offered alternative employment whenever possible, in coordination with the Ma’an labor organization.
* By order of the Jerusalem Education Authority on terminating the employment of staff members at the Jerusalem preschools and primary school via the Lavie Association, we transferred these fourteen staff members (seven teachers, five aides, one preschool teacher, and a housefather) to Hand in Hand. An agreement was drawn up between Lavie and the Association and between the Association and Ma’an and the new workers’ terms of employment were specified.
* **In total,** forty-eight people were recruited and hired (twenty-nine teachers, six preschool teachers, nine aides, two housefathers, and two principals) in all Association schools during the report period.
* **In addition,** internal mobility arrangements and changes in job definitions were made for eleven staff members.

The Coronavirus Crisis

* While our schools were operative between the first lockdown and the current one, we contended with the absence of educational staff members due to isolation or confirmed cases of COVID-19, including time-limited moratoria on educational activity in certain grades and schools due to active cases.
* On September 17, the government imposed a general lockdown that included all schools. The Association board resolved to take several measures, all in coordination and cooperation with the Ma’an labor organization: fifty-one employees were placed on unpaid leave as of September 21 and effective until a return to a routine schedule is announced. These workers received personal counseling from the administrators of our schools and the Association’s human resources and wage department on how to work with government offices in order to receive unemployment benefits. Furthermore, they were offered personal loans in order to get through the interval between the cessation of their employment until their unemployment benefits would take effect.
* On October 11, the Association board will assess the situation and, if the lockdown continues, will consider lowering staff members’ wages or downscaling their posts.
* The process of planning the personnel budget for the current school year lasted until the school year began and continued thereafter, as coronavirus-induced constraints led to many and frequent changes in the Ministry of Education budget. Uncertainty about the Ministry of Education budgets also caused the scope of the positions of most of the Association’s teachers, veteran and newly-hired alike, to be redefined.

General Remarks

* We are continuing to develop and assimilate wage-control procedures together with the administrative staff and the payroll accountants, including monthly comparisons of attendance reports and budget targets.
* An intake booklet for new hires has been written, presenting the conditions, rights, and obligations of employment, the procedures for preventing sexual harassment, and the Association’s rules of behavior and comportment. Once this documentis approved by all relevant parties at the Association, it will be issued to new staff on a regular basis.

H. Looking Ahead—Key Upcoming Issues

* Constructing an economic model for the coronavirus era on the basis of the approved budget: November.
* After successfully replacing the principal of our primary school in Jerusalem, rehabilitating the school and assuring its growth based on:
* work with the new principal on a new pedagogical and budgetary model;
* election of a new parent committee for the primary and post-primary schools, including contending with representatives of the previous committee who oppose the change;
* creating a community leadership for the Jerusalem campus.
* Continued progress in creating a new organizational and educational model and assimilating it in the schools.
* Continued progress in establishing additional post-primary schools at Hand in Hand.