**Quarterly Report to the Hand in Hand Board**

**(AFHIH Board) June 2020**

(The report covers the period March-May 2020)

**A. Coping with the Corona Crisis**

The Hand in Hand schools and communities responded promptly to the restrictions imposed by the Israeli government on the general public following the outbreak of the Coronavirus.

• **Schools**: Like all educational institutions in Israel, the Hand in Hand schools closed on March 15 in order to protect students and teachers and shifted to a distance-learning format. The change forced teachers to adapt overnight to a new technological tool, with all the accompanying advantages and disadvantages. Most of the teachers successfully and creatively managed the transition. They stayed in contact with their students and received ongoing support from the Association’s pedagogic team. It was not easy to cope with the situation; in some schools the transition was smooth, while in others it took longer for students and teachers to become accustomed to the online method. We learned a great deal about the possibilities offered by remote learning, as well as the limitations of this method. The lessons and conclusions we gained from coping with this challenge will continue to be useful long after the Corona crises passes.

• **Communities:** In a period of social isolation and the need to remain at home, our communities also went online. We held panel discussions on various subjects, encounters and dialogue sessions with Members of Knesset and other interesting guests, language classes, courses as part of the Madrassa project, movie screenings with discussions, cooking lessons, bilingual yoga, and many other activities. Some of these activities will continue to be held online after the crisis ends. Members of the communities, with the support of community staff, also initiated and managed a support fund for families from our communities who found it difficult to navigate this period financially. The fund collected money through crowdsourcing from members of our communities throughout Israel.

• **Financial impact:** Like many other institutions, the crisis also had a financial impact on Hand in Hand. Although savings on costs in some areas (mainly due to the shutdown of in-school studies) helped to moderate the financial impact to a degree, we were still forced to make cuts. Some of the association’s employees were placed on unpaid vacation (thereby enabling them to receive unemployment benefit from the state), while the percentage of a full-time position was cut for other workers. We are following the developments on a daily basis and trying to adapt to the changing situation while ensuring that we did not cut essential activities of the Association and lose the employees we will need in the short and long term. From June 1, all employees will return to their normal positions.

**B. Schools and Municipalities**

• **Galilee (250 students, 1st-6th grade)**

• The school is continuing to deepen its project-based learning (PBL) activities, led by Principal Manar Hayadri. The project has been very successful, as reflected in an impressive sign-up rate for the next school year.

• We are involved in a gradual process of redefining the division of the budgetary burden for the school between the Ministry of Education, the local authorities (Misgav, Sakhnin, and Sha’ab), and the Association. The goal is to reduce the sum transferred from the Association and encourage local authorities to provide larger budgets for the school. For the first time in the school’s history, we managed to secure support in the sum of NIS 30,000 from the Sakhnin Municipality.

• **Haifa (180 students, kindergartens + 1st-4th grades)**

• The process of integration in the Hofit School, where we moved this year, has been a success on the whole. Some challenges remain, and we are overcoming these through joint dialogue and expanding cooperation with the principal and the school as a whole.

• The school principal, Iris Giller-Klein, is taking sabbatical leave due to her daughter’s health problems. We are currently in the midst of a search process for a replacement principal for next year.

• **Wadi Ara (270 students, kindergartens + 1st-6th grades)**

• The Bridge over the Wadi School has faced a crisis for the past two years, following the replacement of the principal and the division of the students between two separate campuses during the construction of the new school building. This year we moved into the new campus and the previous principal, Hassan Aghbariya, returned again as principal of the school. As the impact of the move can still be felt, including a decrease in the number of students, the Corona crisis made the school’s recovery process even harder. Over the summer, we will prepare a comprehensive recovery plan, which we will begin to implement in the next school year.

• **Jaffa (455 students, kindergartens + 1st-5th grades)**

• The school is continuing the process of change and improvement that began with the arrival of the new principal, Sharon Michaeli-Ramon, at the beginning of the year. The change has been reflected in improved academic standards, better relations between the school and the community, and the gradual adoption of a multicultural calendar.

• Through joint work by the principal of the kindergartens, Sigalit Givon-Fadida, and the Association staff, a new organizational and budgetary model has been developed for the work of the Jaffa kindergartens over the coming year. This process also necessitated a reduction in the educational staff of the kindergartens, without impairing their bilingual and multicultural character.

• On June 10, an assistant in the kindergarten compound in Jaffa was diagnosed with Corona. As a result, we were obliged to close four of the five kindergarten classes in the compound and to ask all students and staff members to self-isolate. In addition, students and staff members in several classes at our school in Jaffa were also required to self-isolate as students in these classes have siblings in the kindergarten classes in which the assistant worked.

• **Jerusalem (698 students, kindergartens + 1st-12th grades)**

The Jerusalem school is undergoing a challenging period due to problems in the senior management and the parents’ committee that have created difficulties and tensions in the community. We are currently engaged in discussions with the Ministry of Education concerning these issues and regarding the question whether the school principal should remain for another year or be replaced.

• **Beit Berl (89 students, kindergartens + 1st-2nd grades)**

• We have finally received partial institutional recognition of our elementary school in Kfar Sava (recognized but unofficial). This month, in cooperation with the South Sharon Regional Council, we submitted a request for full recognition of the school ahead of the coming academic year.

• The school principal, Yael Sadeh, who entered her position two years ago, has decided to leave her post despite her demonstrated success. She is not interested in working as a principal, and only agreed to take on the position in order to help establish the school. Yael will return to her function as a pedagogic consultant, and we are now in the final stages of locating a new principal.

• **Nof Galil (activities are due to begin in the city in September 2020)**

In March we had an excellent meeting with the mayor and CEO of Nof Galil Municipality. It was agreed that in the coming academic year we will be involved in mixed (Jewish-Arab) kindergartens in the city, and perhaps even in one of the schools. The process was frozen due to the Corona crisis and we are now trying to restart it.

• **Kafr Qassem – Rosh Ha’ayin**

A group of parents from Rosh Ha’ayin is very enthusiastic about the idea of establishing a bilingual elementary school for students from Rosh Ha’ayin (a Jewish city) and the neighboring (Arab) city of Kafr Qassem. We are working with them to help turn the vision into reality. The parents group is active and has managed to attract an additional circle of families from both cities. We are working with the municipalities of Rosh Ha’ayin and Kafr Qassem and have received positive and supportive feedback, although the Corona crisis slowed the process. Over the next two weeks we have meetings with the two mayors and we are working to advance the idea in order to open a first kindergarten in September 2020.

**C. Pedagogic Activities**

• **Pedagogic training**: As soon as the crisis began and the schools closed, the training team stepped up to provide daily support for the teaching staff as they coped with the challenges of distance learning: holding Zoom conversations with the children, preparing online lesson plans, offering emotional support for kindergarten and school teachers, preparing a weekly plan for each grade, preparing video clips for the children by the instructors, and disseminating an evaluation mapping questionnaire for all the teaching teams in order to understand the challenges and successes of distance learning and to see which aspects can be maintained next year.

• **Developing pedagogic materials**: Over the past two months the development of online pedagogic materials has accelerated significantly. School and kindergarten teachers have made impressive efforts in learning how to read stories and run activities for the children online. We took advantage of the period when the instructors did not visit the schools in order to complete the festivals curriculum for early childhood, covering six festivals from three religions.

• **Producing pedagogic videos:** We produced several videos designed to present and teach new content, with an emphasis on the festivals. Instructors and kindergarten teachers who had not had any prior experience in the medium found themselves unable to avoid using this tool due to the Corona crisis, and video material was soon in great demand. We will continue to develop these materials and to encourage others to do likewise.

• **Principals Forum:** Inas Deeb and Dani Elazar are currently holding discussions summing up this year and planning for next year with each of the principals. The goal is to understand which aspects worked well this year and which were less successful and to focus the objectives for next year.

• **Arabic test:** Alongside the response to the Corona crisis, the development team, led by Dr. Nariman Hindi, prepared an Arabic language test for all the Hand in Hand frameworks. The test is intended to evaluate the level of Arabic of all the students – Jews and Arabs – in the 2nd-4th grades. The test will examine reading comprehension, writing, and oral comprehension skills, as well as the ability to speak Arabic for the Arab students only.

**D. Community and Graduate Activities**

• **Online programs:** During the shutdown, the Communities Department restructured its work and moved all its activities online. The community organizers creatively managed to stay in touch with the members of the communities and to create interesting and relevant activities. We learned a great deal from this working method and found that online activities can enrich and expand our community work and help strengthen the bonds between the communities. A bilingual timetable of activities was published every week, including (for example):

- Arabic lessons and lessons as part of the Madrassa project held over Zoom

- Bilingual online yoga classes taught by a professional yoga teacher

- Cooking workshops for the whole family led by various members of communities from across Israel

- Discussions with Members of Knesset and other public figures

- Group screenings of movies followed by discussions with the filmmakers

- Enrichment sessions with experts about the Corona crisis, for example with a child psychologist

- Storytelling workshops and discussions with Hand in Hand graduates focusing on social activism

- Bilingual story time sessions for children

• **Community assistance and support:** As soon as the severity of the Corona crisis became clear in March, we realized that many members of the Hand in Hand communities throughout Israel could face financial problems due to the situation. In order to provide an orderly and fact-based response, staff from the Communities Department drafted an online questionnaire for families who are members of the various communities. The questionnaire yielded information about sick members of the family, family members who had lost their jobs or been placed on unpaid leave, and so on. We also tried to understand how we could help each other beyond the financial level, for example by providing emotional support, help buying food, or organizing online activities for children stuck at home.

• **Assistance fund:** After mapping the needs of the community members, we decided to establish a fund to provide economic support, raised via crowdsourcing among all the members of the Hand in Hand communities around Israel. The fund was managed by staff members from the Communities Department and representatives of the different communities. By the end of April we raised around NIS 40,000 from dozens of families. This sum enabled us to provide over 200 food parcels for families in need of assistance. Additional parcels were distributed to families during the month of Ramadan.

**E. Media Activities**

• **March 3:** Our [Have You Listened to the Arab Voice?](https://www.hih.org.il/the_arab_voice/) project included 10 video clips featuring Arab citizens from around Israel expressing their opinions on various subjects. Following the project, the Hebrew-language Mako news portal published a [comprehensive interview with Sharbal Balutin](https://www.mako.co.il/health-magazine/articles/Article-1335f823c259071027.htm), one of the participants in our campaign, who is considered the pioneer of veganism in Palestinian society in Israel.

• **March 22:** After a planned visit to Israel by a delegation of donors and members of the AFHIH Board was cancelled due to the Corona crisis, President Reuven Rivlin took the time to send [a video greeting](https://www.hih.org.il/%d7%a0%d7%a9%d7%99%d7%90-%d7%94%d7%9e%d7%93%d7%99%d7%a0%d7%94-%d7%a8%d7%99%d7%91%d7%9c%d7%99%d7%9f-%d7%91%d7%a1%d7%a8%d7%98%d7%95%d7%9f-%d7%aa%d7%9e%d7%99%d7%9b%d7%94-%d7%91%d7%99%d7%93-%d7%91%d7%99/) to Hand in Hand’s activists, institutions, and students.

• **April 13:** [A new episode of the online series *Mishmish* (Apricot)](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=229401661508920), produced by graduates of the Hand in Hand schools, appeared on the Association’s Facebook page in Hebrew and Arabic, as well as the English page. Over 40,000 people viewed the episode.

• **April 14:** The Haaretz website published [articles in Hebrew and Arabic](https://www.facebook.com/HandinHandil/posts/3099840916746951?__xts__%5b0%5d=68.ARD_n8RA2Qdg8AyRjLrvBP7VHSM-FKIO4Uz8-KOr3c5p-soXZe45mWaNrU0Dmzl5nPHNusb_7V4Lec5EjSyHwLFih5EcIaaLucy8uGhv22KrkuU5l8-I7gx-RCHY-CbAu-yrrxcA3HduCRRJaCy3tmjQ_ebEuCTdP1Ogz9Mv9SxNm9KTp) in its bilingual content section (“The Zone”) discussing the new episode of *Mishmish*, which focuses on Israeli and Palestinian culture in Jerusalem.

• **April 30:** [A special item](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=226530591965724) about the online series *Mishmish* was published on the Association’s Facebook page to mark the period of the “national days.”

• **May 11:** [CNN broadcasted an in-depth report](https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=173167887344436) on the positive cooperation between Jewish and Arab physicians and nurses during the Corona crisis as reflected in the Arab town of Kafr Qara. One of the key interviewees was Hassan Aghbariya, the principal of our school in the town, who describes his efforts to promote Jewish-Arab partnership.

• **May 17:** [A new episode of the online series Excuse the Question](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6uLiilcRxjc&fbclid=IwAR1O2PMfcda-d90mpM0PBaUSHd-nvVANZLHN3b7-3IbUwd7eYXs1Ho0XYBs), produced by Israel’s public broadcasting corporation, featured Arab children. Two of the girls who participated are Arab students from our junior-high section in Jerusalem.

• **May 21:** A new episode of the online series *Mishmish*, which focuses on Israeli and Palestinian culture, appeared on the Association’s Facebook page in Hebrew and Arabic, as well as the English page. The episode discussed the work of creative artists during the Corona period.

• **June 2:** The Haaretz website published [articles in Hebrew and Arabic](https://www.facebook.com/HandinHandil/posts/3226549050742803?__xts__%5b0%5d=68.ARDl0lJ4kMJmLupWMfaM3bWknVIJcIVpD3pPTqMwdJdxLK87W8sRe9Q8MjU9CIxJDzD49t3Iy9ti0N4KWBH9XYki7jiYpqgREG2VBC4cEhj-pmc-z-gXIL-yWbTQCOTyyXEW7dXfsMDbjH5m7pMhTf1t1SzX_YD6pmnynP-XhWfzkW0U7) in its bilingual content section (“The Zone”) discussing the new episode of *Mishmish*, which focuses on Israeli and Palestinian culture during the Corona crisis.

**F. Fundraising**

(See appendix at the end of the document)

**G. Headquarters and Administration**

• **Director of the Fundraising Department:** During the month of April, Rivka Bardah announced that she had decided to leave her position as director of Hand in Hand’s Fundraising Department. Leah Beinhaker, who has many years’ experience in fundraising, will replace Rivka in this position.

• **Director of the Education and Pedagogy Department:** At the beginning of May, Inas Deeb announced that she has decided to leave her position as head of pedagogy at Hand in Hand. Nadia Kanaani, who served as a teacher and principal at the elementary school in Jerusalem and is currently completing two years’ studies at the School of Educational Leadership, will replace Inas in this position.

• **Corona crisis:** When the instruction to close all schools was issued on March 15 due to the Corona crisis, we prepared an economic model with the goal of estimating the impact of the closure on Hand in Hand’s expenditure and income. Some of the changes were conditioned on the length of the crisis while others were fixed. Based on this analysis, the management of the Association decided on several steps, all of which were taken in coordination and cooperation with the Ma’an workers’ organization:

• **Unpaid leave:** From March 26 through the beginning of the return to routine on May 1, 74 employees were placed on unpaid leave. Their return to work at the beginning of May was coordinated with the school principals. During the period of unpaid leave, the principals and administrators maintained contact with the staff members, offering them help dealing with government websites in order to receive unemployment benefit, among other areas of assistance.

• **Cuts in salaries / scope of positions for employees during the Corona crisis:** The management team discussed the size of the salary cut. We evaluated the expected saving in terms of the Association’s expenditure following these steps and kept the workers informed. The position of some workers was reduced by 20%, while those whose position remained unchanged accepted a salary cut of 5-10% according to the salary level. During the second half of May and the beginning of June, all employees returned gradually to their original conditions of employment.

• **Planning the personnel budget for the next school year:** We collected and collated data from the school principals and the department heads in the Association in order to build the budget and define the needs of our educational institutions ahead of next year.

• We developed and implemented enhanced salary control processes.

• We improved the intake processes for new employees and began to prepare an intake booklet for newcomers.

• **We defined procedures for the enhanced use of the Association’s equipment** – vehicles and laptops.

**H. Looking Forward – Key Items on the Agenda**

• Finalizing the budget based on the first stage of the change to the budgetary model, the unique needs of schools, and the impact of the Corona crisis and of the work plans in the schools and in the Association’s departments – July.

• Finalizing and approving budgetary reports for 2019 – July.

• Coping with the problems at the elementary school in Jerusalem concerning the functioning of the principal and the relations with the parents’ committee.

• Ongoing work on the new organizational and educational model. A date needs to be scheduled for a discussion by the Board.

• The post-elementary team will submit an initial draft of guidelines for establishing additional post-elementary schools within the Association’s various institutions – July. A date needs to be scheduled for a discussion by the Board.