**Project Self-Empowerment for Immigrant High School Students at Risk**

**The following proposal and budget is based on a program geared for 60 Youth at Risk of which at least 65% will be from the Ethiopian Israeli Community. The aim is to pilot the program in the city of Maale Adumim in order to "fine tune" it and develop its feasibility to be replicated throughout the country**

For a generation, the State of Israel and private philanthropists has funneled significant resources into helping the Ethiopian community integrate successfully and contribute to Israeli society. There is difficulty in ascertaining the efficacy of these interventions. First, many programs do not employ rigorous standards to evaluate outcome in a scientific manner. Secondly, many of the outcome studies have been conducted by the same organizations who are actually running the project. The conflict of interest between those who conduct the intervention and those charged with determining its effectiveness is clear. Obviously, the investment, both financially, professionally and emotionally in any project creates a strong bias to see positive results. Therefore, it is extremely difficult to evaluate the outcome of many of the interventions that are currently focused on helping the Ethiopian community integrate.

Project Secure Self is an attempt to provide help for the Ethiopian-Israeli community in a manner that is grounded in theory, implemented systematically and independently evaluated by researchers. It is our goal to not only provide a program that leads to significant change among the Ethiopian-Israeli community, but to identify in an empirically based manner, the ingredients that are necessary and sufficient in order to make a difference that can be sustained and replicated.

Project Self Empowerment : **Theoretical Basis**

The theory underlying this project is that each individual can utilize resources only when the resources are attuned to the individual's salient need at the moment. Gold, for example, may be a valuable resource for an individual trying to achieve financial wealth. On the other hand, it will be much less useful for a person dying of thirst in the middle of the desert. In simple terms, based on Maslow's hierarchical pyramid of human needs, it is necessary to take care of primary needs before attempting to satisfy higher order needs. Going back to the water and gold analogy, the individual dying of thirst first needs to intake liquids before he or she will be able to contemplate the task of acquiring wealth.

The most common target of intervention in the programs offered to the Ethiopian community has been academic enrichment. Tutoring programs, and after school learning enrichment programs abound and show good results in helping many students advance academically. However, there are many youngsters who cannot benefit from these programs. Unfortunately, they are struggling with issues such as extreme financial pressure, low sense of the self's ability to cope with and overcome adversity and an overall poor self-image that is based in an extremely negative self-identity. These kids are struggling with a living reality of single parent or broken homes, economic poverty and little belief in social mobility.

Project Secure Self addresses the fundamental issues necessary for social mobility in a direct and hierarchical manner. First, we address the need to financial stability. Secondly, we address the need to help each child develop a stable and secure sense of self that is based on understanding, accepting and appreciating the positives in their personal and familial background, traditions and culture. Finally, we provide a mechanism through which youngsters can develop their own individual profile of strengths in order to achieve upward social mobility and break through the glass ceilings that limit their progress.

**How Self Empowerment Works**

*I. Financial Responsibility : Jobs and Financial Intelligence*

Project Self Empowerment operates a project in social capitalism in which high school students run a food cooperative within their neighborhoods and communities. Under professional guidance, relationships are formed with food and home supply distributors. A product list of fruits, vegetables food supplies and home products is compiled. The product lists are distributed via the internet and in person to individuals within the neighborhood where the students live and families purchase items from the list. The purchased items are ordered from local distributors and are packed by students in a centralized location within the city. Purchasers may either pick up their orders or have them home delivered.

Through this project, students earn an hourly wage for their work. In addition, they are taught and experience the basic components of running a business operation. Through participation in this aspect of the project the program provides students with a means of achieving important income without the incredible risks that are involved with working on the streets during hours which either conflict directly with school, or make it unreasonable to expect the student to function at school. The current reality is that many of the students at risk who do not participate in after-school programs that are currently offered are seeking work in order to earn money. In most cases there is significant pressure and expectation to work at a young age. Through this program, we are trying to provide for some basic financial needs while also strengthening the youngster's sense that he or she can actually make a difference in changing their life situation for the better.

**II. Knowing One's Self**

Students in this project participate in a weekly seminar devoted to gaining an appreciation of their individual and collective background and culture. This piece of the program is psycho-educational. Students meet with role models who have managed to break the social barrier and achieve success in numerous areas of Israeli society. This includes the military, academia, business, helping professions and sports. Additionally, students are taught their family history and parents and grandparents are presenters that speak of the challenges and richness of previous generations. The goal of this aspect of the program is to provide the students with a positive sense of their ethnic community and an optimistic approach towards making change in their own lives.

**III. Strengthening One's Self**

Each student in the project is given the opportunity to develop a specific area of intelligence in which the student shows natural aptitude. Most often, these areas of multiple intelligence are not highly emphasized in the traditional school situation. Students are paired with coaches or mentors in the areas of sports and nature, art and music or technology and develop their strengths and talents in a more intensive fashion than is possible in the school environment. The goal is to help strengthen the student's sense of self efficacy and internalize the notion that he or she can be an effective agent in creating change in life.

**Program Structure and Design**

*I. Identification of Students*

The program is focused on children from 7th to 12th grade in the Ethiopian community. Principals, guidance counselors and parents may refer students to the program. Every student who is referred to the program will be interviewed by Dr. Chesner. In collaboration with the in-school program coordinator (to be determined by the school principal) an Individualized Self-Empowerment Program (ISEP)will be developed for each student.

The Individualized Self Empowerment Program will provide each student with a personalized plan to

I. Enhance financial security

a. achieve an understanding of personal financial management

b. understanding the basics of personal and business budgeting

c. earn personal income

II. Enhance Self Identity

a. achieve an understanding and appreciation of one's historical, cultural, religious and familial background

b. develop an area of personal strength and excellence

Program Hours

1. Each student will receive 1 hour weekly of financial education

2. Each student will work 4 hours weekly in the project cooperative.

3. Each student will receive 2 hours weekly of personal strength and excellence training

4. Each student will receive one hour weekly of personal mentoring from a mentor who will help the student weave the lessons of the program into their weekly schedule and life situation.

In the 11th grade students will participate in an 8 day journey to Ethiopia. The program will highlight the strengthening of the self by connecting students with members of the Ethiopian-Jewish community of Gondar, where the Israeli students will share Israel experiences with the Gondar youth and describe life in the land of Israel. Youth in the Gondar community are inundated with a great deal of misinformation regarding life in the state of Israel . The Ethiopian-Israeli students who participate in this aspect of the program will interact in a “Youth Group style format with the youth of the Gondar community and be positive ambassadors for Israel and through this experience strengthen and enhance their personal identity.

Program Outline:Yearly Breakdown

7th and 8th Graders

Seventh and Eighth Graders, identified by their schools or community authorities will undergo interviews with Dr. Chesner . In 7th and 8th grade each student participate in one hour of identity development seminar and one hour of strength and excellence training. Parents of each student in the program will be offered participation in a parent empowerment training program in Amharit.

Each student in the program is assigned a personal mentor. The mentor is either a young teacher or an advanced student in a college program for youth at risk who is trained and supervised by Dr. Chesner. The mentor works as a direct liaison between the school, family and the program. On the average the mentor spends 30 minutes per week in direct contact with either the student himself or significant adults in the student’s life. The role of the mentor is to increase the probability that the student will in fact comply with and participate fully with the demands of the program. Mentors meet for weekly supervision meetings with Dr. Chesner. They maintain weekly contact either face to face or via media with their students and they maintain contact with teachers, coaches, relatives and employers who are significant figures in the student’s life.

9th and 10th grade

9th and 10th grade participants will begin to receive the one hour weekly of financial management seminars and will be offered two hours weekly of working for the food cooperative.

In addition, each participant will continue to receive two hours weekly of strength and excellence training.

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11th graders will participate two hours weekly in the personal identity training program with the goal of attending the Journey to the Self trip to Ethiopia.

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In addition, 11th graders will be required to work a minimum of 4 hours weekly in the food cooperative to enhance personal income and to contribute towards the trip to Ethiopia.

12th graders will receive one hour weekly of personal mentoring in order to help guide them towards making positive placement in post-high school programs, be they the military, pre-military academies or national service.

12th graders will serve as counselors for younger children in the program. They will also play a leadership role in managing the food cooperative.

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Structural Overview:

I. What the program provides?

A. Supervision of teachers, counselors and mentors in a therapeutic psycho-educational approach to the youth at risk

B. Self Empowerment Program for Youth at Risk.

1. Weekly activities in areas of strength to the youth at risk. (sports training

2. Weekly Self Identity Empowerment Sessions for Youth at Risk in the Program

3. 3 day summer camp Program for Youth at Risk in Strengthening the Self

4. Leadership training Program for 11th graders at Risk

5. Work Program for Youth at Risk.

C.. Mentoring Program for Youth at Risk

II. How does the Program get to the students who need it?

1. Dr. Chesner meets with the School Representative responsible for youth at risk and interviews student candidates for the program.
2. Based on the results of the interviews an Individualized Self-Empowerment Program is designed for each student. This ISEP contains the empowerment activities that each student is assigned in order to help empower him.
3. Each student is assigned a mentor from the program staff who follows up on implementation of the ISEP and engages the student in motivational interactions in order to maintain his participation in the program. The mentors require direct access to the school representative who is responsible for the program. Our estimate is that the school representative who coordinates the program from within the school will require an allocation of one hour per week for every 5 children in the program.This time is divided between meetings with Dr. Chesner and the mentors who are working with the children. Additionally, the coordinator can serve as an important liaison between the child’s school and the after school program.

B. The school coordinators first task is to identify potential candidates for the program. The criteria for inclusion into the program are as follows:

a. Child meets the Ministry of Education and Welfare criteria for youth at risk-

academic failure or underachievement

special education placement

truancy or behavioral problems (including delinquency)

economic distress

family dysfunction

emotional illness

C. Each student referred for inclusion to the program is interviewed by Dr. Chesner. Based ojn the interview and the school recommendation, an Individualized Self Empowerment Program (ISEP) is developed for the child.

D. The components of the ISEP

a. Communal programs such as "Space" that may meet some of child's needs are identified.

b. Child is placed in Self-Empowerment Program at his appropriate grade level

1. academic strength program

2. self awareness program

3. domain of strength program.

c. Child is placed in Social Capitalism Program

d. Child is placed in Summer Orientation Program.

e. ISSP Progress Meetings Occur once monthly as child's progress through program is

monitored.

**Program Schedule**

June: Students at risk are identified and undergo interviews throughout the month to determine needs and appropriateness for the program.

July : 3 Day Summer Orientation at Mechinat Eitan in which principles of the program are presented:

Self Esteem

Excellence in Sports

Financial Independence

August is spent on staff developing the Program

Weekly Schedule : September through June

7-8th grades

1 hour weekly Self Esteem Training

2 hours weekly sports excellence training

One Hour Weekly Financial Independence Training

2 hours weekly academic enrichment training (in conjunction with SPACE)

9-10th grade

1 hour weekly Self Esteem Training

2 hours weekly Sports Excellence Training

2 hours weekly Financial Independence Work and Training

2 hours weekly Academic Enrichment (in conjunction with SPACE)

11th Grade

2 hours weekly Self Esteem Training

2 hours weekly Sports Excellence Training

2 hours weekly Financial Independence Work and Training

2 Hours weekly Academic Enrichment Training

11th graders will participate in an 8 day long Journey to The Self in Ethiopia: Developing Identity and Overcoming Challenge

12th Grade

2 hours weekly Leadership Training

1 hour weekly Transition Post High School Guidance

2 hours weekly Sports Excellence Training

3 hours weekly Financial Independence Work and Training

2 hours weekly Academic Enrichment Training

Parent Training: Parents of 7th and 8th graders will undergo 8 sessions in Parent Effectiveness Training.

Parents of High School Students will participate together with their children in 8 hours of Parent-Adolescent Communication and Problem Solving Training.

Staff, Salaries and Program Budget

**Proposed Budget**

Full time director of Program 240,000 NIS yearly

Coordinator of Food Cooperative Program 30000 NIS yearly

Coordinator of Sports Excellence Program 24,000 NIS yearly

Coordinator of Self Development Program 24,000 NIS yearly

Personal Physical Trainer 16,000 NIS yearly

Football Trainer 16,000 NIS yearly

Mentors for at risk children (based on 30 minutes per week for 60 children)

30 hours weekly for 40 weeks throughout year at rate of 90 NIS per hour 108,000 NIS

Professional Speakers: 40 hours at rate of 350 NIS per hour=14,000 NIS yearly

Summer Orientation Program 25,000 NIS

Winter Vacation Self Development Seminar Days 8000 NIS

Equipment throughout year for program 10000 NIS

Miscellaneous Expenses 25,000 NIS

Yearly Budget 540,000 NIS (approximately 155,000 US dollars.)

In addition, assuming that each year 10 eleventh grade students take the Identity Through Challenge Trip to Ethiopia, and assuming that the trip can be done at a cost of $2000 per student, the program will require another $20,000 yearly.

The full yearly budget for the program will then be approximately $175,000 yearly.