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ENGELBERG CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Evaluation of the PACT and PACT+ Projects to Promote Ethiopian-Israeli Children and their Parents

Summary Final Report

Jack Habib ♦ Dalia Ben-Rabi ♦ Smadar Somekh
Viacheslav Konstantinov ♦ Matityahu Angel

The study was initiated by JDC-Israel and the Jewish Federations of Cleveland, New York, Washington, Detroit, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Palm Beach and funded with their assistance



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Executive Summary

PACT (Parents and Children Together) is a unique initiative for young Ethiopian-Israeli children intended to enhance their successful integration into the education system and Israeli society. The program was established to address the language and cultural gaps and the profound financial hardship facing the Ethiopian immigrants, which had led to considerable disparities between the scholastic performance of the Ethiopian-Israeli children and their non-Ethiopian counterparts. The project is a joint initiative of Jewish Federations of North America and JDC-Israel, in partnership with government ministries, local authorities, foundations and NGOs. The project was first implemented in Beersheva in the 1998/1999 school year and in 2000 it was extended to additional cities – Rehovot, Ramle, Afula, Hadera and Netanya. In 2012, PACT was implemented in 15 cities throughout Israel.

The project strategy was drawn up to rectify the fragmentation of multiple players in the early childhood service system, which meant that there was effectively no holistic care in the early childhood services for the Ethiopian-Israeli population. The project set itself a twofold challenge: to coordinate a fragmented system, and to cope with the unique needs of the Ethiopian-Israeli community. This project is distinguished by the holistic approach it utilizes to address these challenges.

The project is committed to: working concomitantly in different areas of the children's lives, inter-organizational cooperation, and the involvement of the Ethiopian-Israeli community. Initially, the project focused on preschoolers and their parents. In 2002/3, an additional component was added in some of the PACT cities. Known as PACT+, it provides additional support to Ethiopian-Israeli children in elementary schools. PACT thereby creates a continuum of services, which makes it possible to sustain and further the achievements of the target population.

Among the project activities:

- ◆ Increasing the integration of the children into preschool frameworks
- ◆ Providing enrichment and scholastic assistance (particularly in language and literacy) for children in preschools and elementary schools
- ◆ Working with Ethiopian-Israeli parents on parenting issues
- ◆ Developing culturally sensitive models of interventions for Ethiopian Israelis
- ◆ Training professionals working with Ethiopian-Israeli children and parents in order to enhance their awareness of the cultural characteristics of the community.

The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute (MJB) has evaluated the project since its first implementation and for ten years the Institute has examined issues of implementation and outcomes for the children (aged 3, 6 and 8) and their parents. The current report includes the main findings from the 10-year evaluation of the project in six cities. It presents the study

findings in two areas: the project outcomes for the children and their parents; and the processes of transfer of responsibility and sustainability of the project in 2009/10.

The following are among the main findings:

- ◆ The study indicates that the project has had considerable success in: expanding, diversifying and adapting a range of early childhood services for Ethiopian-Israeli children and their parents; creating mechanisms to promote inter-organizational cooperation and coordination; implementing organized processes of municipality-wide planning, resource allocation and follow-up; training professionals and raising their awareness of the unique cultural characteristics of the Ethiopian-Israeli community; strengthening the involvement of members of the community at all levels in the program.
- ◆ The findings indicate a substantial improvement in the children's scholastic performance compared with the comparison group, after controlling for the impact of changes in the characteristics of the families of the children participating in the program over the years. The improvement among the children was particularly evident among the younger groups (in preschool and first grade). The percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli first-graders who performed poorly declined by 40% in language and 55% in mathematical thinking. The percentage of students performing well in these subjects increased. These changes led to a considerable narrowing of the gaps between the Ethiopian-Israeli students and the non-Ethiopians.
- ◆ Concurrently, there was an improvement in the parents' involvement in the children's schools/preschools and in their education. In addition, the mothers' employment rate rose dramatically from 38% to 68%.
- ◆ JDC-Israel began gradually phasing out and transferring responsibility for the project to local agencies in 2006/7. The study found considerable evidence of continued implementation of the project after the phase out and the transfer of responsibility had begun. Thanks to alternative sources of funding – mainly from municipalities and the central government – the reduced financial support from the Jewish Federations of North America did not result in a decline in funding for the project as of 2011. Cooperation with government initiatives such as the National Program for Children and Youth at Risk, which was based on the principles of implementation advocated by the project, have increased the sources of funding and organizational support for the project's continuation. The study findings also point to the challenges still facing the project and all those striving to advance the Ethiopian-Israeli population. These challenges include the need for sustained efforts to close the remaining gaps between Ethiopian-Israelis and their peers; for increased support for students in the higher grades of elementary school in order to help them cope with the heavier scholastic demands; for continued support for the professionals in the cities; for the continued strengthening of partnerships between the professionals and the Ethiopian-Israeli community; and for the further dissemination of models and services developed through the project.

The study findings were discussed annually with the PACT directors and professionals at the local and national level and served as the basis for improving the project over the years. The findings are currently being used as the basis for discussions between the project management and the Ministry of Education, with regard to further partnership in implementing and strengthening the project.

Acknowledgments

The study was conducted over a period of approximately ten years. We regret that we are therefore unable to thank personally all of the very many people who contributed to it during that time.

We are particularly grateful to the project directors at JDC-Israel and Ashalim – Rami Sulimani, director-general of Ashalim, Anat Penso, the first national director, and Riki Aridan, director of PACT Southern Region and subsequently national director – who were involved in all stages of the study. We thank the regional and local directors; the members of the Jewish Federations, in particular the Jewish Federation of Cleveland, and their representatives in Israel; the homeroom and preschool teachers who tirelessly collected data throughout the study years; the officials in the local authorities; the many professionals and Ethiopian-Israeli residents of the cities who shared their knowledge, experience and insights about the implementation of the project, along with its achievements and difficulties; and the various local and district inspectors who shared their professional knowledge with us and helped us obtain information for the study.

We also wish to thank our colleagues at the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute – particularly Miriam Cohen-Navot, director of the Engelberg Center for Children and Youth – who were involved with and supported the study throughout; former staff members: Talal Dolev, former director of the Engelberg Center for Children and Youth and Chen Lifshitz, first senior researcher of the study and Tirzah Margolin; the many researchers who were involved in various parts of the study; Karen Lasky, who helped with the English versions of the annual reports; the fieldwork team, headed by Chen Tzuk-Tamir, for their dedication to the task of gathering the data; Naomi Halsted, for translating this report; Sue Bubis, for her assistance with the figures; and Leslie Klineman, for preparing the report for publication.

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1. Introduction: Background to the Project

PACT (Parents and Children Together) is one of the most significant interventions ever developed to assist in the integration of the Ethiopian-Israeli population, and it is unique among the early childhood initiatives implemented for any group in Israel. Its goal is to promote the successful integration of young Ethiopian-Israeli children into the education system and Israeli society. The project is a joint initiative of Jewish Federations of North America¹ and JDC-Israel, in partnership with government ministries, local authorities, foundations and NGOs. The project was first implemented in Beersheva in the 1998/1999 school year and in 2000 it was extended to additional cities – Rehovot, Ramle, Afula, Hadera and Netanya. In 2012, PACT was implemented in 15 cities throughout Israel.²

PACT has expanded significantly since its inception: it began in a single city and by 2012 was being implemented in the 15 cities with the largest concentrations of Ethiopian-Israeli families in Israel.

The main goals of the project are:

- ◆ To promote the development and achievements of Ethiopian-Israeli children and to reduce the gaps between them and non-immigrant children
- ◆ To improve their integration in school in terms of achievements and adjustment
- ◆ To strengthen the involvement of Ethiopian-Israeli parents in their children's education.

Initially, the project focused on preschoolers and their parents. In 2002/3, an additional component was added in some of the PACT cities. Known as PACT+, it provides additional support to Ethiopian-Israeli children in elementary schools. PACT thereby creates a continuum of services, making it possible to sustain and further the achievements of the target population.

PACT was established in the wake of the waves of Ethiopian immigration (in 1984, 1990 and in subsequent years) and in response to growing evidence of significant gaps between the learning performance of the Ethiopian-Israeli children and that of their peers. The gaps were most evident in the low percentages of Ethiopian-Israeli students who were eligible for a matriculation certificate, and in the low rate of Ethiopian-Israeli university students (Weisblau, 2010; Vurgen, 2006; Epel, 2004; Habib et al., 2009). For example, according to Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) data, in 1998, 30% of Ethiopian-Israeli students were eligible for a matriculation certificate, vs. 52% of the rest of the students (CBS, 2009). An analysis of the

¹ Cleveland, New-York, Washington, Detroit, Baltimore, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Philadelphia, Ann Arbor and Palm Beach.

² Beersheva, Kiryat Malachi, Kiryat Gat, Ramle, Rehovot, Lod, Gadera, Beit Shemesh, Ashkelon, Hadera, Netanya, Afula, Kiryat Yam, Pardes-Hannah-Karkum and Yavneh.

Ministry of Education GEMS tests³ for 2002 reveals that the scholastic performance of 75% of the Ethiopian-Israeli students in fifth and eighth grades that year were lower than the national average in English, science, mathematics and Hebrew (Belashe, 2005). Moreover, it was evident that the gaps between the Ethiopian-Israeli students and the other students in mathematics and language increased with age (Belashe, 2005; Ministry of Education, 2011).

At the root of these gaps is the fact that, from early childhood, Ethiopian-Israeli children and their parents have to cope with special challenges that make integration into the education system difficult. These challenges include: language difficulties of both children and parents; the inability of many parents to read and write, even in their mother tongue (Amharic or Tigrinya), and the transition from what was, in most cases, an illiterate environment to one that places great importance on command of the written language; little awareness of how to utilize public services such as family health clinics (Tipat Chalav), afterschool activities and public libraries and difficulty accessing them; the inability to afford early childhood educational frameworks and little knowledge of the advantages they offer; cultural differences in the perception of the role of parents and the role of teachers; difficulties integrating into employment; and financial difficulties.

All these challenges are reflected, *inter alia*, in: the absence of the stimulation and enrichment aids that are normally found in Western homes, such as books and games (King et al., 2003); limited utilization of public services compared to the non-immigrant Israeli population; and a relatively low rate of integration into educational frameworks for children from birth to age 2 (Noam et al., 1997; King et al., 2003; Lifshitz et al., 2002).

There have been tailored initiatives for Ethiopian immigrants in various intervention areas since they first arrived in Israel (Habib and Halaban-Eilat, 2010; Habib et al., 2010[a]; Mandler and King, 2008; Somekh et al., 2012; Ben-Rabi et al., 2011[a]; Baruj-Kovarsky and Cohen-Navot, 2009). Prior to PACT, however, none had focused on early childhood. PACT's program strategy was drawn up to rectify the fragmentation of multiple players in the early childhood service system. There was effectively no holistic care in the early childhood services for the Ethiopian-Israeli population. Each of the services had great difficulty contending with the need to advance a population with an extremely low level of education, considerable linguistic and cultural gaps, and severe economic hardship. Moreover, the population had experienced a particularly traumatic and abrupt transition from their country of origin to a country, culture and society completely different from their own. These factors presented the service system with the enormous challenge of becoming acquainted with the population, understanding its particular characteristics and needs,

³ The GEMS—Growth and Effectiveness Measures for Schools (meitzav)—exams are national tests for students in second, fifth and eighth grades under the auspices of RAMA – the National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education. The tests are given in about a quarter of all schools every year in Hebrew/Arabic (in all grades), mathematics, English and sciences (in fifth and eighth grades).

bringing out its strengths and enabling it to fulfill its potential. PACT set itself a twofold challenge: to coordinate a fragmented system, and to cope with the unique needs of the Ethiopian-Israeli community.

The project was developed at a critical time. In the 1990s Ethiopian immigrants received widespread support from Jewish communities in the Diaspora. By the end of the decade, however, that support was no longer forthcoming. By the start of the new millennium, following a period of considerable progress, the population suffered two severe blows (Habib et al., 2010[b]): one was the economic crisis, and the other was the second intifada, which impacted the daily lives of all families in Israel, but hit the weaker families particularly hard. Significant cuts in financial support for poor populations in the middle of the decade likewise had a detrimental effect. PACT brought the struggle of the Ethiopian-Israeli population back to the attention of the Jewish communities of the Diaspora and established a system of support and supervision, not only to cope with the challenges of advancing the population and reducing the gaps between it and the rest of Israeli society, but also to soften the severe blow they had been dealt.

What makes PACT unique is the holistic approach it has adopted for addressing the challenges facing the population and the service system. The following are among the activities conducted in the two components of the project:⁴

- ◆ Increasing the integration of the children into preschool frameworks by providing subsidies and encouraging the parents to send their children to preschools
- ◆ Providing enrichment and scholastic assistance (particularly in language and literacy) for children at preschools, community centers and – in some of the cities – in elementary schools as well
- ◆ Working with Ethiopian-Israeli parents on parenting issues at family health centers, daycare centers, preschools, schools, community centers and social service departments
- ◆ Strengthening the role of cultural liaisons (members of the community) in health and education settings
- ◆ Developing culturally sensitive models of interventions for Ethiopian Israelis in the social, health and education (formal and informal) services, including guidance centers for parents, family health centers, special enrichment frameworks for children and parents, scholastic and enrichment programs for students, and models for working with mothers and fathers
- ◆ Developing training programs to increase awareness—among professionals who work with Ethiopian-Israeli children and parents—of the cultural characteristics of the

⁴For details of the programs and their main activities, see Appendix 1.

community and to provide them with information about appropriate methods of intervention.

PACT is based on a commitment to: using a holistic approach to addressing needs, fostering inter-organizational cooperation, and cultivating the involvement of the Ethiopian-Israeli community. A unique organizational structure was developed to reach these ends. It included the local steering committee and subcommittees that included all the relevant municipal agencies in the local authority, all other relevant organizations, and representatives of the Ethiopian-Israeli community.

Since 2006, preparations have been made for the phasing out of JDC-Israel and the Jewish Federations, i.e., scaling down their funding and transferring responsibility for implementing the project. In order to ensure its sustainability, the project has begun a process (which continues to this day) of transferring responsibility for funding and implementation to municipal and central government agencies. This process began in Beersheva and has gradually spread to the other cities.

Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute has been involved in PACT since its inception. When preparations were underway to implement the project, the Institute conducted surveys of the needs of the Ethiopian-Israeli populations in the cities where PACT was to be implemented. Starting in 2000, it conducted an ongoing evaluation focusing on the major cities: Beersheva, Rehovot, Afula, Netanya, Hadera and Ramle. These studies continued until 2010. The findings of these studies served as the basis for annual discussions on the development of the project at the local and national levels. The evaluation focused on two areas: the implementation and outcomes of the project. In 2009/10, the implementation component focused on sustainability and the transfer of responsibility for the project from JDC-Israel to the local agencies.

The current report includes the main findings from the 10-year evaluation of the project. It starts with a brief summary of the study design and then presents the main findings regarding the success of the project in meeting its goals. It concludes with a discussion of the success of the project in sustaining both the organizational and programmatic elements of the project as the shift in the sources of finance proceeds.

2. The Evaluation Study

The first part of this section describes the strategy used to examine the outcomes for the children and their parents. The second part describes the strategy used in 2010 to examine the process of transfer of responsibility and the sustainability of the project.

2.1 Study Method: Outcomes of the Project for the Children and their Parents

The study focused on children aged 3, 6 and 8 and on their parents, and asked three main questions:

1. Has there been an improvement in:
 - a. The level of scholastic and socio-emotional functioning of the Ethiopian-Israeli children?
 - b. The level of awareness of the Ethiopian-Israeli parents of their children's situation at school?
2. Have the performance gaps between the Ethiopian-Israeli children and that of non-Ethiopian children been reduced? Similarly, have the gaps in the involvement of parents in their children's education been reduced?
3. To what extent can the change in the performance of the Ethiopian-Israeli children and the involvement of their parents be attributed to the project?

The outcomes of the project were not examined on the basis of longitudinal monitoring (i.e., over time) of the same group of children and parents, but on a comparison of age cohorts (school grades). The performance of the children at the end of first grade served as the main marker for assessing the accumulated impact of participation in the project at preschool age. By comparing the functioning of the children and parents in successive cohorts, we were able to determine whether the achievements of children who participated in the project were greater than those who did not, and whether the improvement, as reflected in first grade, was greater the younger the age at which the children had joined the project (degree of exposure). Only those who had participated in the project from birth through first grade were considered to have received full exposure to the project.

When making comparisons of successive years, it is necessary to distinguish the impact of the project from other factors that could have brought about changes in the performance of children in different age cohorts. For example, a higher percentage of new immigrants in a given cohort could negatively affect the performance of that cohort, regardless of participation in the project, since the length of time that the parents have been in Israel is likely to positively affect the performance of their children. In order to control for the impact of these variables, we used a multivariate linear regression comprising the following child and school variables: gender of the child, length of time in Israel, family structure (one or two parents), percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli children in the child's class, and the school stream (State or State Religious system).

In addition, a comparison was made between the performance of Ethiopian-Israeli children and a sample of non-Ethiopian children in the same classes. This measure was designed to assess the extent of the gaps and whether they had changed. This comparison made it

possible to distinguish the impact of the project from that of other general activities to advance all the children in the schools and preschools.

Finally, until 2007/8, when PACT was implemented in Ashkelon, Ashkelon's Ethiopian-Israeli children served as a comparison (control group) group for the national evaluation of the project. Thus, we compared the performance of children who had participated in the project with those in Ashkelon who had not, so as to identify to what extent improvements that occurred in the PACT cities since the program was initiated could be attributed to the program as opposed to more general trends and other factors influencing Ethiopian-Israeli children. Consequently, information has been gathered on the Ethiopian-Israeli children in Ashkelon since 1999/2000. Note that there were also some special interventions – unrelated to PACT – for Ethiopian-Israeli children in Ashkelon. Thus, we are measuring, PACT's impact over and above the existing interventions that were implemented in Ashkelon or the PACT cities themselves prior to the introduction of the program.

Data Collection

Data were collected in every study year in all of the cities (the project cities and the comparison city) on all the Ethiopian-Israeli children in educational frameworks in the three age cohorts examined in the study, as well as on non-Ethiopian children in the same grades (in the project cities). The data on the performance of the children and the involvement of their parents were gathered at the end of each school year from the homeroom and preschool teachers. The assessment of the children's performance was not based on general, open questions. Rather, the classroom and preschool teachers assessed each child using a detailed questionnaire about developmental skills, scholastic performance, and other scholastic behaviors. The questionnaires were developed together with inspectors at the Ministry of Education and were based on markers of knowledge set by the Ministry for children of different ages. Basing the assessment on detailed, structured tools and detailed questions about each individual child increased its accuracy and validity.

The questionnaires examined several domains: scholastic performance (language and mathematical thinking), learning behavior, and socio-emotional functioning. For each domain a scale was developed. The students were ranked on each item in the scale from performing poorly to average to well. An average score was also calculated for each domain. We report on the average score as well as the percentage of students who perform poorly and the percentage who perform well.

Data on the parents was gathered about: information the level of involvement in the child's school or preschool as reflected by attendance at parent-teacher meetings, awareness of the child's scholastic status, and the assistance given to the child to attend school/preschool regularly and be properly prepared (with the right school supplies and completed homework assignments).

The data were collected on children in three age cohorts (3, 6 and 8) from 1999/2000 through 2010.⁵ For each age group, the periods of follow-up were different. For ages 3 and 6, the first measurement was close to the time of the initiation of the project. The follow-up year was 2006/7 for age 6 and 2005/6 for age 3. In addition, there was a second follow-up date for some of the cities at age 6 in 2009/10. What is important, however, is that all of these dates reflect a point at which the children being considered had received full exposure to the PACT program. Thus, the report presents a comparison between the baseline year and the year by which the children could have received full exposure. However, the examination of the age 8 cohort did not begin early enough for us to measure a baseline of children who had not participated in PACT at all. Thus, the first measurement year for age 8 (2002/3) evaluated children who had already been exposed to the program at ages 4 and 5. The second measurement point was in 2007/8 at which time the children had had full exposure to PACT. Thus, the comparison indicates the degree to which there was further progress among children who had full exposure. In 2002/3 PACT+ was also introduced in these cities and thus the baseline also includes at least the impact of one year of PACT+.

The data presented in this report focus particularly on children aged 6 (end of first grade) and their parents. This group was consistently examined for the greatest number of years and cities, since one of the main goals of the project was to raise the level of preparation for first grade among Ethiopian-Israeli children. Selected findings are presented about preschoolers (aged 3) examined in four cities and third-graders (aged 8) examined in three cities.

2.2 Study Method: Transfer of Responsibility and Sustainability of the Project

During the ten years of the study, we examined aspects of implementation of the project, including inter-organizational cooperation, partnership with the Ethiopian-Israeli community, work with the parents, implementation of literacy programs in preschools, work with the community centers, and the cultural sensitivity of the programs. These topics were examined using a range of qualitative study methods.⁶

In 2009/10, we conducted a comprehensive examination of sustainability of the project after JDC-Israel began phasing out its involvement. We examined how the project was conducted at the national level and, in greater detail, the situation in the three cities where the project had been implemented for the longest time: Beersheva, Rehovot and Afula.

⁵ The data on children in first grade (age 6) were collected in 6 cities every year from the baseline year (2000 or 2002) through 2006/7. In 4 cities, the data were collected through 2009/10. Data about children in preschool (age 3) and third grade (age 8) were collected in some of the cities in some of the years (for details, see Appendix 2).

⁶ See the list of key reports on various implementation issues in the bibliography.

The study looked at three main questions:

1. To what extent have the project and its principles been implemented since JDC-Israel began phasing out?
2. To what extent has responsibility for implementing the project been transferred to local agencies?
3. How have the characteristics of the project contributed to its chances of continuation and sustainability?

Our analysis of these topics was based on current literature regarding the sustainability of innovative programs. Most important to our analysis was the comprehensive study by Savaya & Shapiro (2008), which examined the main characteristics that contribute to the survival of social intervention programs.

The sources of information by which sustainability and transfer of responsibility were examined included:

- ◆ In-depth interviews with the project directors and persons involved in its implementation at the national and municipal levels as well as professionals in the three cities: Representatives of JDC-Israel and the Federations (8); representatives of government ministries (3); project directors in the cities, senior officials at the local authorities, and professionals in various services in the cities (40)
- ◆ Discussion groups with Ethiopian-Israeli activists (2)
- ◆ Observations of the project's interdisciplinary committees
- ◆ A detailed questionnaire completed by the local directors in the three cities. The questionnaire addressed: the activities conducted through the project, implementation of its working principles, cooperation among the various agencies, involvement of the community, the main changes in the project over the years of its implementation in the city, and action taken to transfer responsibility to local agencies
- ◆ Project documentation containing information – including budgetary data – about the way the project has been conducted.

3. Project Outcomes Regarding the Performance of the Children and the Involvement of their Parents

In this section, we present the main findings on the changes in performance of the children in each of the age cohorts and in the involvement of their parents from the start of the project (1999/2000) through the final measurement (2005/6-2009/10). As noted, most of the data collected were for children aged 6 and this cohort is the focus of the first part of this section. Selected findings about 3-year-olds and 8-year-olds are presented in 3.2 and 3.3 respectively.

3.1 First-Graders (Aged 6)

The data below relate to children in 6 cities: Beersheva, Rehovot, Afula, Netanya, Hadera and Ramle. The first measurement in Beersheva was in 1999/2000; in the other cities, the first measurement was in 2001/2. The last measurement was made in all 6 cities in 2006/7, but an additional measurement was made in 4 cities⁷ in 2009/10.

a. Status of 6-Year-Olds and their Families in the Baseline Year

When the project was first introduced there were considerable differences between the level of performance of the Ethiopian-Israeli children and their parents and that of the non-Ethiopian children and their parents in all the cities examined.⁸ These differences emphasize the great challenge facing the project as well as its participants.

(1) Characteristics of the Families of the 6-Year-Olds

The main differences between Ethiopian-Israeli and non-Ethiopian families (Figure 1) were:⁹

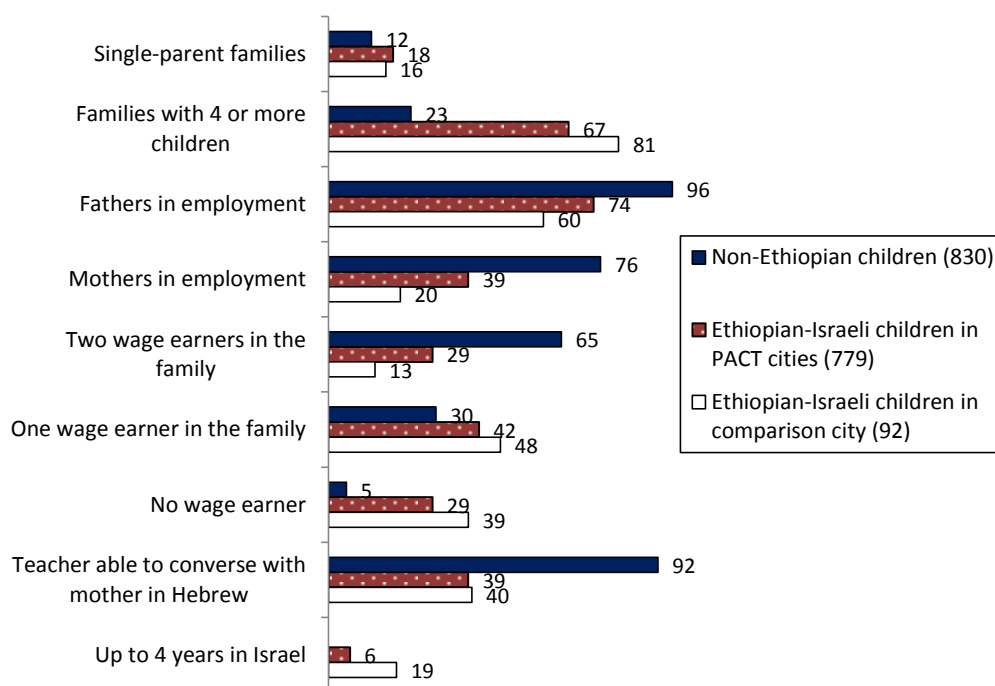
- ◆ The percentage of children living in families with 4 or more children: 67% of the Ethiopian-Israeli children vs. 23% of the non-Ethiopian children.
- ◆ Employment rates: the families of 71% of the Ethiopian-Israeli children had at least one wage earner, vs. 95% of the non-Ethiopian children. 74% of the Ethiopian-Israeli fathers were employed vs. 96% of the non-Ethiopian fathers, 39% of Ethiopian-Israeli mothers were employed vs. 76% of the non-Ethiopian mothers.
- ◆ Knowledge of Hebrew: The homeroom teachers reported that they could speak Hebrew with the mothers of only 39% of the Ethiopian-Israeli children vs. 92% of non-Ethiopian mothers.

⁷ Rehovot, Afula, Beersheva and Netanya

⁸ The findings presented are the averages of all six cities measured together.

⁹ Similar differences were found for the children aged 3 and 8.

Figure 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Families of First-Graders in the Baseline Year (Start of the Program),* by Population Group (Average in Six PACT Cities and the Comparison City, Percent)



*Baseline year in Beersheva and Ashkelon (comparison city): 2000; in Rehovot, Hadera, Netanya, Ramle and Afula: 2002

(2) Performance of the 6-Year-Olds

When the project was introduced in the cities, the achievements of the Ethiopian-Israeli first-graders were considerably lower than those of the non-Ethiopian children:

- ◆ Learning behavior:¹⁰ The percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli children whose learning behavior was assessed as adequate was lower than that of the non-Ethiopian children: 59% vs. 84%, respectively.
- ◆ Scholastic performance: The percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli children who performed well in language skills was about half that of the non-Ethiopian children (33% vs. 69%, respectively). The percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli children who performed poorly in language skills was three times higher than that of the non-Ethiopian children (27% vs. 9%, respectively). The situation was similar regarding good and poor performances in mathematical thinking.

¹⁰ Learning behavior: Doing homework, paying attention in class, cooperating with other children when carrying out assignments, etc.

(3) Involvement of the Parents in the Education of their Children at Age 6

At the time the project was introduced to the cities, the involvement of Ethiopian-Israeli parents in their children's educational frameworks was considerably lower than that of the non-Ethiopian parents:

- ◆ Based on the homeroom teachers' reports, the percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli children whose parents were aware of their scholastic status was about half that of non-Ethiopian children (42% vs. 86%, respectively).
- ◆ Gaps (albeit smaller) were also found in the attendance rates at parent-teacher meetings (72% vs. 95%) and in the rates of readiness for school – bringing the right equipment, doing homework, etc. (70% vs. 95%, respectively).
- ◆ With regard to regular attendance at school (at this age, considered a measure of the involvement of the parents), no differences were found between the Ethiopian-Israeli children and the others (91% vs. 92%, respectively).

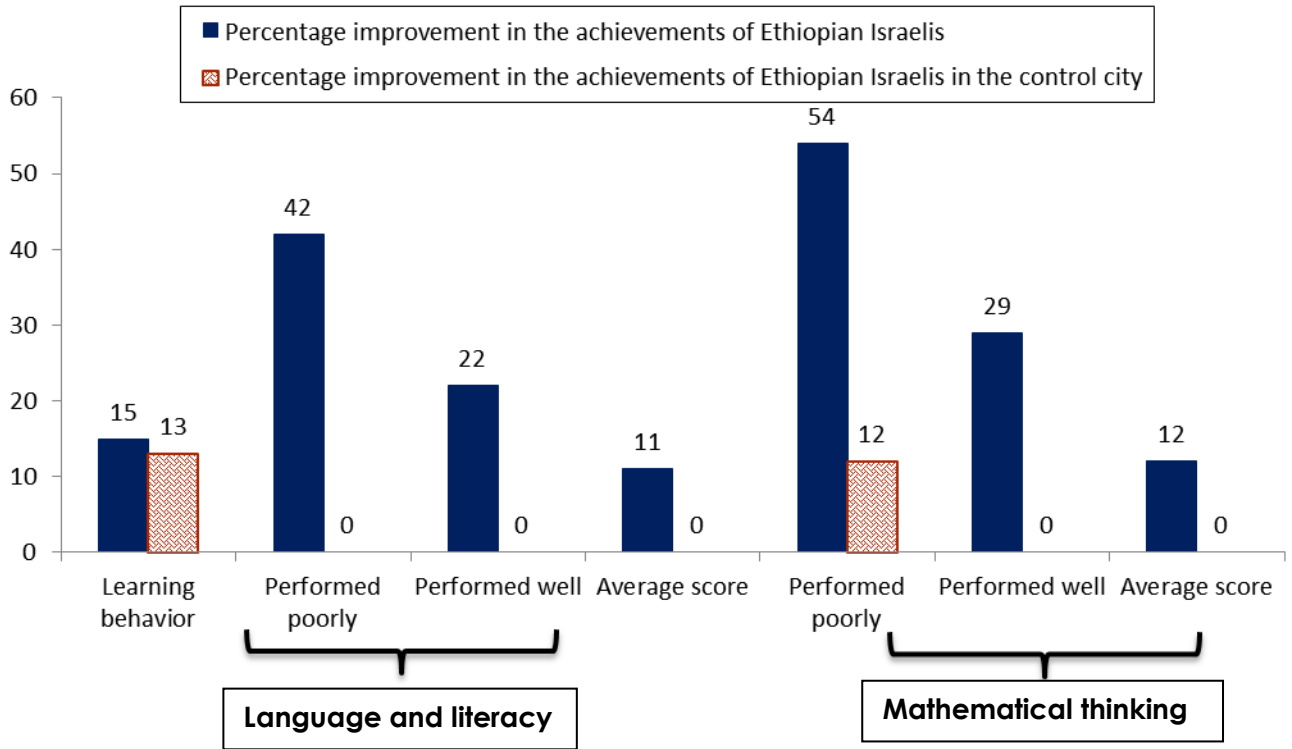
b. Progress of Ethiopian-Israeli 6-Year-Olds and their Parents, and Reduction of the Gaps between them and Non-Ethiopians, 2006/7

(1) Progress of the Children

In 2006/7, the final year of measurement in all 6 cities – the scholastic performance and learning behavior of the Ethiopian-Israeli children at the end of first grade were better than those of the Ethiopian-Israeli children in the baseline year (and better than Ethiopian-Israelis in the control group, as will be discussed below) and the gaps between them and the non-Ethiopian children had narrowed (figures 2 and 3).

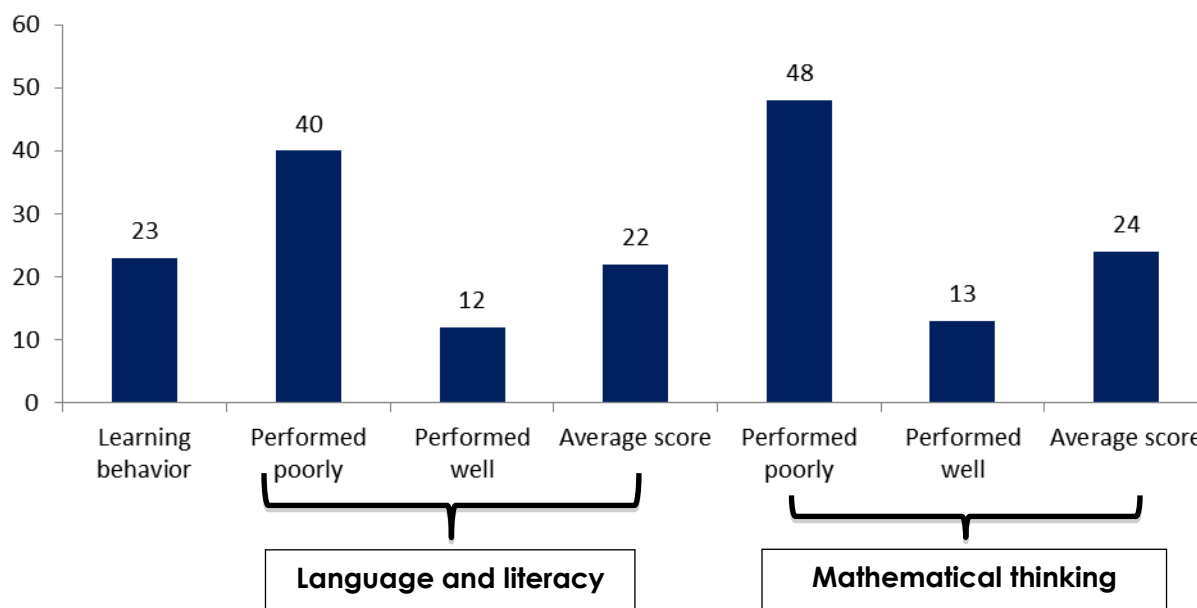
- ◆ Performed poorly: There was a decline in the percentage performing poorly (i.e., an improvement) in language skills (42%) and mathematical thinking (54%). The rate of improvement in the different cities ranged from 15%-63% in language skills and from 39%-67% in mathematical thinking. Furthermore, the gaps between the percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli children and non-Ethiopians who were performing poorly narrowed in language skills (40% reduction) and mathematical thinking (48%).
- ◆ Performed well: Concurrently there was an increase (improvement) in the percentage of children performing well in language skills (22%) and mathematical thinking (29%). The gaps between the Ethiopian-Israeli children and the non-Ethiopians who were performing well were reduced by 12% and 13%, respectively.
- ◆ Learning behaviors: Here too, there was an improvement of 15% and gaps were reduced by 23%.
- ◆ The information about reduced gaps also indicates that the improvement among the Ethiopian-Israeli children exceeds the possible impact of any general improvement that may have occurred at the schools.

Figure 2: Percentage Improvement in the Performance of Ethiopian-Israeli First-Graders, Selected Indicators, 2006/2007 Compared to Baseline Year (Average in Six Cities and Comparison City, by Regression Coefficients) *



* Percentage improvement in the achievements of the Ethiopian-Israeli children: The difference between the percentage in the final year and the percentage in the baseline year, divided by the percentage in the baseline year. An improvement in the "performed poorly" indicator means a decline in the percentage of poor performers; in the "performed well" indicators, it means an increase in the percentage of those who performed well. The average score is a summary score of all the categories from performing poorly to average, to performing well.

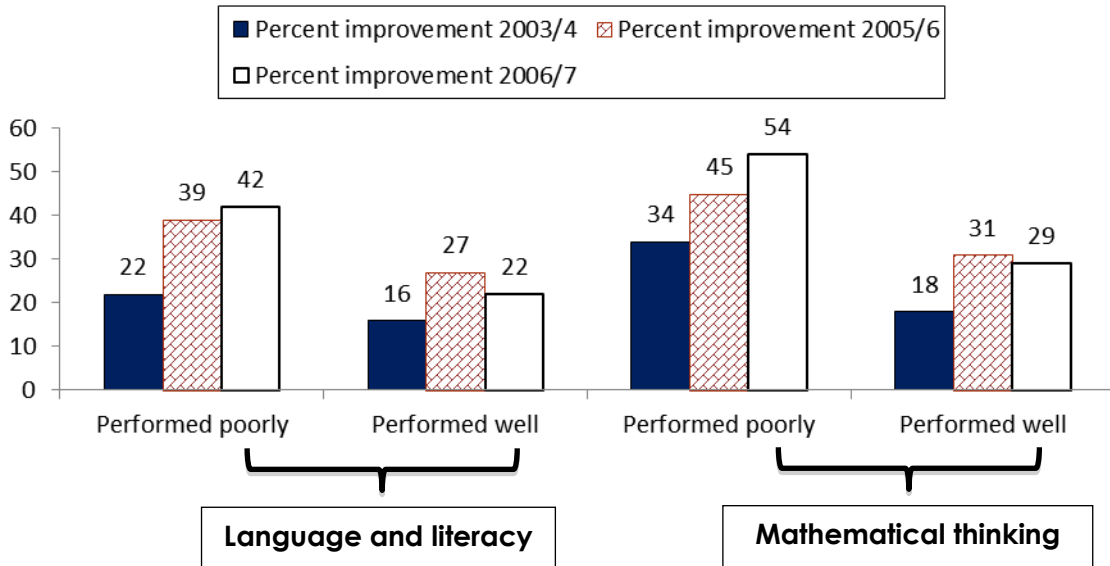
Figure 3: Reduced Gaps between the Performance of Ethiopian-Israeli First-Graders and Non-Ethiopians, Selected Indicators, 2006/2007 vs. Baseline Year (Average in Six Cities, by Regression Coefficients)*



* Reduced gaps between Ethiopian-Israeli and non-Ethiopian students: The difference between the gap in the baseline year and the final year, divided by the gap in the baseline year (if the gap has not been reduced, to calculate the average of each of the cities, a value of "0" was entered). All the differences in the gaps are statistically significant, $P < 0.05$.

- ◆ Changes by the number of years of participation in the project: In addition to the baseline year and the final year, data were collected in all 6 cities in 2004 and 2006. As expected, according to the "exposure" hypothesis, there was an increase in the extent of improvement in the performance of the Ethiopian-Israeli children concomitantly with the number of years they had participated in the project (Figure 4).
 - The decline in the rate of poor performance (i.e., improvement) in language skills among first-graders in 2003/4 compared with the baseline was 22%.
 - In 2005/6 (again compared with the baseline), it was 39%.
 - In the final year (2006/7), when the children had been fully or almost fully exposed to the project in the 6 cities, the rate of decline was, as noted, 42%. The situation was similar for other indicators too. As explained above, this trend is one of the factors enabling us to attribute the improvement to the impact of the project.

Figure 4: Percentage Improvement in the Performance of Ethiopian-Israeli First-Graders in Various Years, vs. Baseline Year, Selected Indicators (Average in Six Cities, by Regression Coefficients)



- ◆ Remaining gaps: In 2006/7, after the improvement, there were still gaps between the performance of Ethiopian-Israeli first-graders and that of the non-Ethiopian children. The gaps were smaller among those who performed poorly (11 percentage points in language skills and 8 percentage points in mathematical thinking) and greater among those who performed well in those areas (28 percentage points in language skills and 27 percentage points in mathematical thinking). In the average scores for the two areas (on a scale of 1-5), the gap that remained was 15% in language skills and 11% in mathematics.
- ◆ Changes in the comparison city (Figure 2): In the comparison city, where the project was not implemented, there were changes in only two indicators during the same period: an increase of 13% in the rate of Ethiopian-Israeli students showing normative learning behaviors (similar to the 15% increase among the children in the project cities) and a decline (improvement) of 12% in the percentage of poor performance in mathematical thinking (far smaller than the 54% improvement in the project cities). No decline (improvement) was found in the rate of poor performance in language skills, nor was there an increase in the percentage of students who performed well in both areas. As explained above, this comparison is one of the factors enabling us to attribute the improvement to the impact of PACT.
- ◆ Changes in the comparison city after the project was introduced there: In 2008, the project was first implemented in Ashkelon. Between 2008 and 2010, there were considerable improvements in the performance of the first-graders in the city: an increase of 57% in the rate of those who performed well and a decline of 27% of poor performers in literacy; an increase of 59% in the rate of those who performed well in

mathematical thinking, and a decline of 33% of poor performers. Starting in 2008, data were also collected on non-Ethiopian children in that city and the findings reveal that between 2008 and 2010 there was a considerable reduction in the gap between the Ethiopian-Israeli first-graders and the non-Ethiopian first-graders: the gaps in the rate of poor performance in language skills and mathematical thinking were reduced by 30% and 39%, respectively. The gaps in the rate of children who performed well in language and mathematical thinking were reduced by 45% and 36%, respectively.

(2) Progress in the Involvement of the Parents of 6-Year-Olds in the Education of their Children in 2006/7

By 2006/7, children in the first grade had already been exposed to the program since birth. A comparison of 2006/7 and the baseline year shows improved involvement of Ethiopian-Israeli parents in their children's educational process:

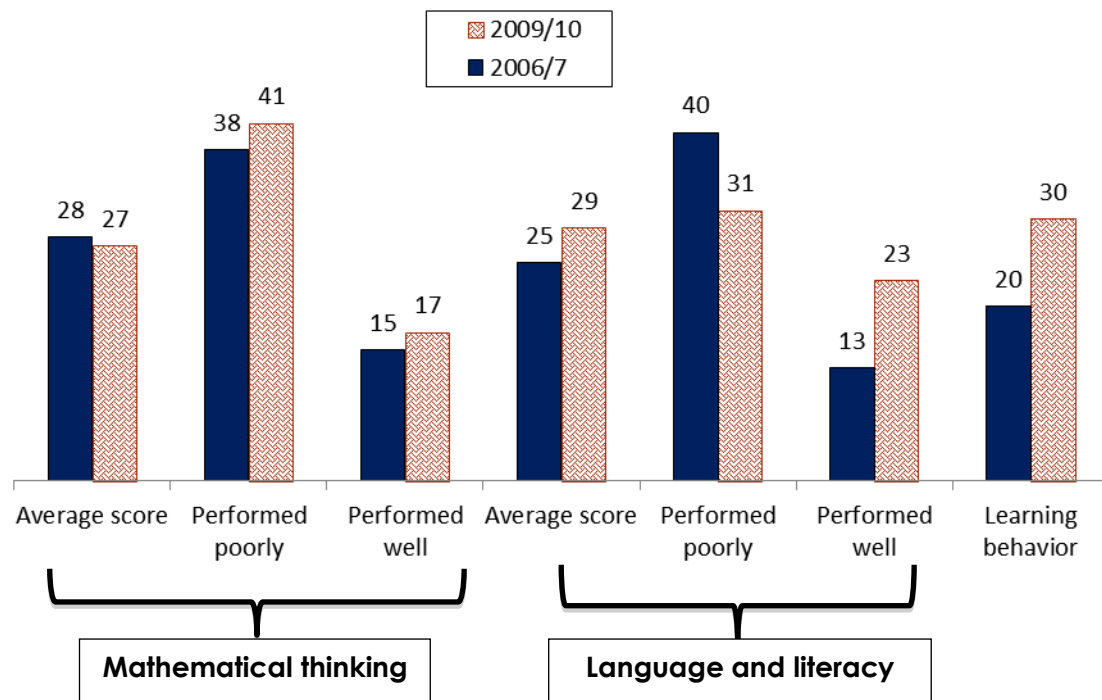
- ◆ The percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli children whose homeroom teachers considered the parents to be aware of the scholastic status of their children increased by 52% and the gap between them and non-Ethiopian children was reduced by 32%. The percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli children whose parents attended parent-teacher meetings also increased (by 16%) and the gap between them and non-Ethiopians was reduced by 28%.
- ◆ With the exception of similar improvement in parent awareness there was no significant improvement in most of the indicators during this period in the comparison city.

Along with these changes, there were also changes in the parents' involvement in other domains not directly connected with the school. The most prominent changes were a significant increase in the percentage of working mothers (from 39% to 67%) and the subsequent decline in the percentage of families with no wage earner; and an increase in the percentage of mothers with whom the teacher was able to converse in Hebrew (from 39% to 55%).

(3) Progress at Age 6 after "Full Exposure," from 2006/7 to 2009/10

In Beersheva, Rehovot, Netanya and Afula, the monitoring of the performance of the children and their parents continued until 2010, i.e., about three years after the children and their parents had been "fully exposed" to the project. It was not expected that subsequent cohorts of first graders receiving full exposure would show greater improvements than the first cohort to have received full exposure or that the gap between them and the non-Ethiopian children would continue to decline. However, there was hope that the improvements and the reduced gaps that had been achieved would be maintained. And indeed, the findings reveal that the reduction in the gaps measured in 2006/7 (the baseline year) remained similar in 2010, and there were in fact further gap reductions in some of the indicators (Figure 5). Moreover, for parent involvement, there was a further reduction in the gaps in attendance at parent-teacher meetings and in the awareness of the children's performance in school.

Figure 5: Percentage of Reduced Gap between the Performance of Ethiopian-Israeli and Non-Ethiopian First-Graders, Selected Indicators, 2006/7 and 2009/10 vs. Baseline Year (Average in Four Cities, by Regression Coefficients)



* $P < 0.05$ (significant changes in the gap between the baseline and final years. All the changes are statistically significant, except for the change in the gap among those who performed well in language and literacy in 2006/7).

3.2 Preschoolers (Aged 3)

In Beersheva, Rehovot, Hadera and Netanya, data were collected on 3-year-olds and their parents until 2005/6. By that year, the 3-year-olds in those cities had been exposed to the project since birth. Except in Hadera, data were also collected in 2009/10. Note that while all the 6- and 8-year-olds attended elementary school, not all the 3-year-olds attended preschool and the enrollment rates varied from year to year and from city to city. An increase in preschool enrollment was one of the goals of the project, and this fact could have had an impact on the findings regarding changes in the performance of the children at this age. For example, if the enrollment rate increased from year to year, this would most likely be reflected in an increase of weaker students who were less likely in earlier years to attend pre-school. This change in the composition of the children attending preschool could mask the impact of the project.

a. Performance of the 3-Year-Olds and Functioning of their Parents in the Baseline Year

(1) Performance of the Children

The items examined for the 3-year-olds were linguistic-cognitive performance, general performance at preschool, social functioning, independence and absence of negative behavior. In the baseline year, gaps were found between the performance of the Ethiopian-Israeli children and the non-Ethiopians in two areas:

- ◆ **Linguistic-cognitive performance:** The performance of 52% of the Ethiopian-Israeli children vs. 78% of the non-Ethiopian children was assessed as good.
- ◆ **General performance in preschool:** The performance of 62% of the Ethiopian-Israeli children vs. 74% of the non-Ethiopian children was assessed as good.

In the areas of social functioning, independence and the absence of negative behavior, the performance of the Ethiopian-Israeli children was similar to that of the non-Ethiopians.

(2) Parental Involvement

The involvement of the parents in preschool frameworks was examined by their presence at parent-teacher meetings, their awareness of their child's progress in preschool (as assessed by the teacher), and the child's regular attendance at the framework. At the start of the project, gaps were found in two areas:

- ◆ **Parents' awareness of their child's progress:** 43% of the Ethiopian-Israeli parents vs. 82% of the non-Ethiopian parents
- ◆ **Attendance at parent-teacher meetings:** 65% of the Ethiopian-Israeli parents vs. 89% of the non-Ethiopian parents.

b. Progress of the 3-Year-Olds and their Parents and Reduced Gaps between them and Non-Ethiopians

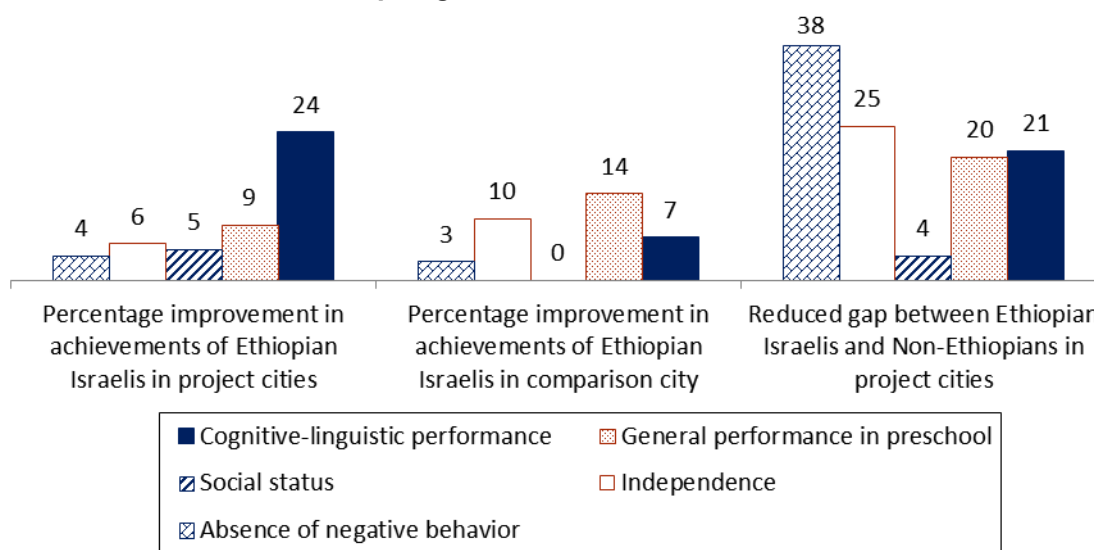
(1) Children, 2006 – Four Cities

In 2005/6, an improvement was found in the two areas in which there had been the most significant gaps at the start of the program (Figure 6):

- ◆ **Linguistic-cognitive performance:** In 1999/2000 Ethiopian-Israelis lagged farthest behind their peers in linguistic cognitive performance, but by 2005/6 they showed their greatest improvement in this area: There was an improvement of 24% in the percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli children who performed well (compared with an improvement of 7% in the comparison city) and a reduction of 21% in the gap between them and the non-Ethiopian children.
- ◆ **General performance in preschool:** There was an improvement of 9% in the percentage of Ethiopian-Israeli children who performed well and a reduction of 20% in the gap between them and the non-Ethiopian children, though the improvement in the comparison city was similar.

- ◆ **Social functioning, independence and the absence of negative behavior:** As noted above, at the start of the project, the performance of the Ethiopian-Israeli children was similar to that of the non-Ethiopians (as was found regarding the socio-emotional state of the children in the other age cohorts). In these areas, most of the Ethiopian-Israeli children performed well at the start of the project (between 71% and 81% in the various areas). However, in these areas too there was an improvement in 2006 (4-6 percentage points) and even the small gaps at the start had been reduced.

Figure 6: Percentage of Improvement in the Performance of Ethiopian-Israeli Three-Year-Olds in Four PACT Cities and in the Comparison City, and the Percentage Reduced Gap between Ethiopian-Israeli and Non-Ethiopian Children, Selected Indicators, 2005/6 vs. Baseline Year,* by Regression Coefficients



*Baseline for Beersheva and Ashkelon: 2000; Rehovot: 2001; Netanya and Hadera: 2003.

(2) Parents, 2006 – Four Cities

There was improvement in the two major indicators of parental involvement:

- ◆ **Parents' awareness of their child's situation in preschool:** The involvement of the Ethiopian-Israeli parents improved by 38% and the gap between them and the non-Ethiopian parents was reduced by 11%.
- ◆ **Attendance at parent-teacher meetings:** An improvement of 11% and a reduction of 17% in the gap between the Ethiopian-Israeli parents and the non-Ethiopian parents.
- ◆ **Comparison city:** In the comparison city the involvement of the Ethiopian-Israeli parents at the start of the project was similar to that of the parents in the project cities, yet there was no improvement throughout the years that were examined.

(3) 2009/10 – 3 Cities

For nearly all the examined items, the extent of the gap reductions in the performance of the children and their parents remained the same in 2010 in the 3 cities where the

evaluation continued. In the linguistic-cognitive performance, however, the gap continued to close – in 2010, the gap was reduced by 30% compared with the baseline measurement.

3.3 Third-Graders (Aged 8)

The examination of the age 8 cohort had a number of limitations. For this cohort, the study was conducted only in three cities: Beersheva, Rehovot and Hadera. Moreover, the evaluation did not begin early enough to measure a baseline year. The first measurement year (2002/3) reflects the situation of children that had been exposed to the program at both ages 4 and 5. The second measurement point was in 2007/8 and reflects the degree to which there was further progress among children who had full exposure.

In 2002/3 PACT+ was also introduced in these cities and thus the baseline for this group also includes at least the impact of one year of PACT+.

a. Performance of the 8-Year-Olds and Involvement of their Parents in 2002/3

Similar to the picture emerging from the data on first-graders, there were significant gaps in the first year of measurement between the Ethiopian-Israeli children and the other students. These gaps were greater than those found among the first-graders and reflect the fact that the challenges facing Ethiopian-Israeli children increase as the curriculum becomes more complex and challenging from grade to grade. Similarly, there were considerable gaps in parental involvement as measured by parents' awareness of the performance of their children and the children's readiness for school.

b. Progress of the Ethiopian-Israeli 8-Year-Olds and their Parents by 2007/8

- ◆ **Children:** 2007/8 was the first year by which third-graders in all three cities had been fully exposed to the impact of PACT (since birth in 2000) and PACT+ (since first grade). There were improvements from 2002/3 to 2007/8 in the performance of the third-graders and a reduction in the gaps with respect to the percentage of students doing poorly in language skills and in mathematical thinking (performed poorly) as well as in learning behaviors. In the comparison city there was no improvement in math or in learning behaviors and a much smaller improvement in language.
- ◆ However, there were significant differences between the 3 cities. In Beersheva there were much larger improvements in the percentage doing poorly and significant gains in the percentage doing well in language skills as well as in learning behaviors (26%-38% in the various indicators). The improvements in Beersheva, we believe, are attributable to the fact that a modified and more effective model of PACT+ was implemented in Beersheva during this period so (for a description of the program in Beersheva, see Ben-Rabi et al., 2011).
- ◆ The percentage reduction in the gaps was even greater than the percentage improvements because there were declines in the performance of the non-Ethiopian pupils. The average reductions in the gaps in the 3 cities was 14%-29% and even greater in Beersheva (19%-55%).

- ◆ **Parents:** There was an improvement in the parents' involvement in two indicators: parents' awareness of the scholastic status of their children (an increase of 48%, a reduction of 37% in the gap); and the children's readiness for school (an increase of 15%, a reduction of 15% in the gap). The improvement in Beersheva was much greater in these indicators as well (an increase of 55% in parents' awareness and a 35% reduction in the gap; an increase of 28% in readiness for school and a 41% reduction in the gap). In the comparison city, no changes were observed in the various indicators except for awareness. The improvement in awareness was still much less than in the PACT cities.
- ◆ In sum, we see that the increase in exposure to PACT and PACT+ for the 8-year-olds at the end of grade 3 does show some continued improvement in the two cities, and very significant continued improvement in Beersheva where the most advanced version of the PACT+ model was implemented.

4. Sustainability of the Project and Transfer of Responsibility to Local Agencies in 2009/10

The evaluation study examined the implementation of the project and its principles on an ongoing basis since the inception of the project. The study found that PACT considerably expanded and diversified the range of interventions for Ethiopian-Israeli children and their parents and successfully put into practice the unique principles that it sought to apply. This success is true for all the PACT cities, although the emphases varied between cities. The final stage of the study in 2009/10 examined the sustainability of the project. This study was conducted several years after JDC-Israel began gradually phasing out and transferring responsibility for the project to local agencies which started in 2006/7. The study also examined how the project's characteristics may have contributed to its sustainability, in light of the factors highlighted in the general literature on sustainability. The main findings are described below.

4.1 Transfer of Responsibility for the Project and Sustainability

Three key aspects of transfer of responsibility and sustainability were examined: a. The inter-organizational mechanisms; b. The implementation and funding of programs; and c. The implementation of principles.

a. Inter-Organizational Mechanisms

Due to the interdisciplinary and inter-organizational character of the project, the process of phasing out JDC-Israel involvement and of transferring responsibility for continued implementation to local and national agencies poses complex challenges. Accordingly, the main strategy taken by the project was to empower the municipalities as key leaders of the project. This strategy is grounded in the way that the project has been implemented throughout the years – alongside JDC-Israel, the project partners in implementing activities in

every city have been municipal agencies, in cooperation with the municipal and district inspectorates.

The municipalities have been preparing to assume responsibility for the project since 2006, based on a strategic plan drawn up by JDC-Israel in consultation with the Jewish Federations and the municipalities.

In the 3 cities examined, there was gradual transfer of responsibility for implementing the project to local agencies. The process was different in each of the cities, and included at least one of the following elements: municipal funding for the salary of the local director; the allocation of office space in a municipal building; assigning of responsibility for scheduling and chairing the inter-organizational committees to a municipal employee or an Ethiopian-Israeli activist; and incorporating project committees as sub-committees within the municipal committee framework.

b. Implementation and Funding of the Programs

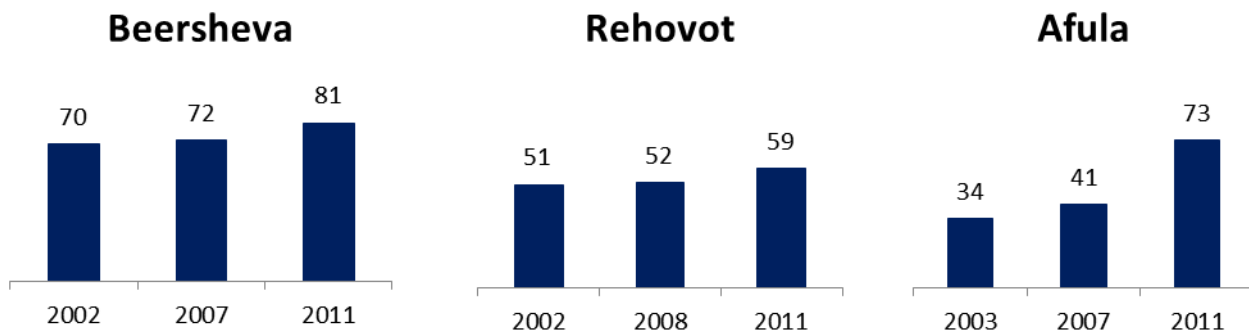
Implementation: In preparation for the phasing out of JDC-Israel involvement, each of the cities conducted a process of prioritization in which they examined the importance of all the programs and activities. In this way, they were able to downsize or discontinue some of the activities included in the project if it was decided that they were no longer essential or that they could be provided to the target population through services provided to the general population. Certain general activities that had been emphasized in the early years of the project were also reduced, such as training programs for professionals and Ethiopian-Israeli activists, although some of the cities reported the need to continue these activities. Nevertheless, in all cities, a wide range of projects and activities that provide direct inputs in a range of areas, using a variety of methods, to parents and children of various ages, are still being implemented through the project. Municipal or government agencies have already assumed responsibility for the implementation of various programs. In addition, some programs that were implemented by external agencies have been transferred to local agencies.

Funding: Since the project began, agencies other than JDC and the Federations were partners in its funding (ranging from 30%-70% of the project budgets in the various cities). Funding from the Federations increased during the early years of the project, and peaked in 2006-2008. Since then, these budgets have been reduced (the 2011 budget showed a decrease of 25%-37% since the peak of Federation funding in each city). Concurrently, there has been a steady increase in the funding from other sources, such as the local authorities, the government, and nonprofit organizations. In 2010/11, in the 3 cities examined, the main share of the budget for project activities was funded by municipal and government agencies or the voluntary sector (59%-81%), and not by the Jewish Federations (Figure 7).

In some cases these sources replaced federation funding for existing activities; in some cases, these sources funded additional related activities. One of the main sources of funding

is a multiannual agreement with the Ministry of Education, which provides for the ongoing funding of project activities in both the "old" and new cities. Overall, the scale of funding in each of the 3 cities was maintained even after the JDC and the Federations began scaling down. Despite this success, it should be noted that some of the officials in the local authorities expressed apprehension about further reductions in the JDC budget and uncertainty about the size of the budget from alternative sources in the coming years.

Figure 7: Percentage of the Funding from Non-Federation Sources in Three Cities in Selected Years



c. Principles of Implementation

As noted, the PACT model is based on several key principles (a holistic approach to services; inter-organizational cooperation, and involvement of the Ethiopian-Israeli community). In implementing the principles, the local municipalities were able to adapt flexibly to the unique and changing circumstances in each city. These principles are clearly present today, in the work and understanding of the professionals at the municipal organizations that provide services to the Ethiopian Israelis.

- ◆ **The holistic approach to addressing needs:** One of the main principles of the project is its holistic approach to the diversity of needs of the children and their families. The approach finds expression in the continued implementation of the broad range of programs and activities designed for different needs, different age groups, different target populations and different settings. The activities are held from morning through afternoon, and they address, to varying degrees, a range of aspects of the child's life: health, education, enrichment, and emotional and social needs. The professionals interviewed throughout the municipalities reiterated their ongoing commitment to this approach.
- ◆ **Inter-organizational cooperation:** The organizational mechanisms (the inter-organizational committees formed during the project to guarantee cooperation and a holistic approach) still exist and remain active. Respondents reported that they continue to make a major contribution to achieving the goals of the project. In some cities, the organizational mechanisms have been assimilated into broader municipal mechanisms (e.g., the overall municipal early childhood committee). Furthermore,

there is evidence that the program has influenced broader inter-organizational processes in the municipalities.

- ◆ **Involvement of the Ethiopian-Israeli community:** The project made great efforts to involve the members of the Ethiopian-Israeli community as partners in the planning, decision-making and implementation of the project as a whole and of the various programs. In addition, it made efforts to strengthen and promote the local communal leadership and volunteer efforts on the part of the community. This involvement found expression in the inclusion of members of the community on the various steering committees, in the employment of many members of the Ethiopian-Israeli community in key roles in the PACT programs and in the promotion of volunteer activities by members of the community.

We found that the role of the community has been largely maintained since the phase out began. Those who had been involved as activists or staff of the various programs have in the course of the project acquired skills and connections with municipal representatives and professionals that were significant in enabling them to continue to play important roles. Still, some of the community activists expressed their concern that their influence would be weakened as JDC continues to phase out.

4.2 Characteristics of the Project that Increase the Chances of Long-Term Sustainability

The study found that the project has multiple characteristics that are shown in the literature (Savaya and Shapiro, 2008) to increase the chance of sustainability of social intervention programs after the initiating organization phases out. These characteristics include: an implementation theory and action model; internal regulation processes and regular evaluation of the implementation of the project; flexibility of the project and programs and adaptation to changing needs; a clear funding strategy from the start of the project; the recruitment of a diversity of partners and supporters; investment in assimilating knowledge and expertise; and timely preparation for the process of transferring responsibility.

Another factor contributing to the continued success and sustainability of the project is the increasing recognition of the importance of inter-organizational cooperation at the national and local levels.

PACT itself has played a part in promoting this recognition. Even beyond PACT's efforts, however, new possibilities have been created to join with new national initiatives based on inter-organizational cooperation. Prominent examples are the National Program for Children and Youth at Risk and the Five-Year Inter-Ministerial Program to Improve the Integration of Ethiopian Israelis. Although these programs do not focus exclusively on the areas addressed by PACT (the five-year plan also addresses areas such as housing; the target population of the National Program consists of children in risk situations from all the population groups in Israel), their organizational mechanisms and budgets are important sources of support for the project's activities and strengthen PACT's chances of continuation.

5. Main Insights and Future Challenges

The goals of PACT are to promote the development and achievements of Ethiopian-Israeli children, to improve their integration in school (particularly their arrival in first grade), and to strengthen the involvement of Ethiopian-Israeli parents in their children's adjustment to the education system.

5.1 Main Insights

The study indicates that the project has done much to: expand, diversify and adjust the array of services for Ethiopian-Israeli preschoolers and primary school students and their parents; train professionals and familiarize them with the distinctive cultural characteristics of the community; and promote working methods based on a range of aspects of the lives of the children and their families, on inter-organizational cooperation, and on partnerships between the professionals and the community.

The study found considerable evidence of continued implementation of the project after JDC-Israel began to phase out and transfer responsibility for implementation to the local authorities. The project was found to be based on methods that the literature shows to enhance the chances of sustainability.

The study findings show a considerable improvement in the two main focus areas of the project – the scholastic performance of the children and the involvement of the parents in the education of their children:

- ◆ An improvement in the involvement of the parents and children and the reduced gaps between the Ethiopian Israelis and the non-Ethiopians were found in all the PACT cities. This finding demonstrates the ability of PACT to make a significant difference in a wide variety of local settings.
- ◆ The estimate of the improvements was adjusted for the impact of changes in the demographic characteristics of the children and their parents. As the improvements were considerably greater than those in the comparison city, we were able to attribute them for the most part to the impact of the project.
- ◆ The findings indicate greater improvement in the performance of the children the longer they have been exposed to the project. The impact of the project is at its greatest when the children have participated since birth.
- ◆ The measurement of the overall impact of the program focused particularly on ages 3 and 6 (preschool and first grade). The improvement is reflected in a reduced number of poor performers (i.e., more students performing averagely) and also an increased number of those performing well.

- ◆ Notwithstanding the considerable improvement in achievements, there remain significant gaps between the Ethiopian-Israeli and non-Ethiopian students in all areas examined. Moreover, these gaps increase as the grade level rises.
- ◆ The study data are consistent with national data published in 2011 by the National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education (Ministry of Education, 2011). These data indicate reduced gaps between Ethiopian-Israeli and non-Ethiopian fifth-graders in the GEMS test in Hebrew and math between 2007/2008 and 2009/2010 and in PACT cities. However, the GEMS results also indicate that there remain significant gaps and that the gaps in eighth grade are greater than in fifth grade.
- ◆ The findings compare very favorably with the literature on the extent of impact that can be expected from early intervention programs for children from disadvantaged populations and the difficulty of maintaining the achievements of early childhood intervention programs (Staham and Eisenstadt, 2001; Karoly et al., 2005; Barnett, 2011; Leak et al., 2010; Currie, 2001; US Department of Health and Human Services, 2010; Reynolds et al., 2010). These studies emphasize the need for continued support for students in educational frameworks as is reflected in the PACT+ program.
- ◆ With regard to parents, the findings show a great improvement in their involvement in their children's educational frameworks and scholastic status. There was also a considerable improvement in the employment rates of the parents (chiefly the mothers) and in the language skills of the mothers.

5.2 Future Challenges

- ◆ While the program did significantly reduce educational gaps, PACT by no means eliminated them. Thus, the Ethiopian-Israeli youth are still in need of support in order to further strengthen their achievements, especially as difficulties tend only to increase as students advance to higher grades.
- ◆ The ongoing challenge of supporting Ethiopian-Israeli youth relates both to the significant population of new Ethiopian immigrants that has come in the last decade and that needs considerable special support in its first years in Israel, as well as to children and youth whose families have been in Israel longer or who were themselves born in Israel. This fact is in light of recent findings (e.g., Kahan-Strawczynski et al., 2010) that Ethiopians born in Israel continue to face very significant difficulties.
- ◆ The PACT program provided very significant ongoing training for professionals throughout the service system that come in contact with the Ethiopian-Israeli community. There is a need to ensure that opportunities for such training continue to be available.
- ◆ The significant partnerships with the Ethiopian-Israeli community need to be sustained. Members of the community can play an active role in engaging public support for efforts to assist the community and in sustaining the achievements of the project.

- ◆ Even if the shift in responsibility and financial support from the federation system to other sources has been quite successful thus far, sufficient financial support will remain an ongoing challenge.
- ◆ It is important to continue to integrate the PACT programs into national programs such as the national Program for Children and Youth at Risk and other national initiatives. Moreover, the principles of PACT have important implications for all minority groups as well as for the early-childhood system in general and it is important to continue to pursue the realization of these broader implications.

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Appendix 1: Programs and Work Models Developed through PACT

Area	Program	Target Population
Health	Program to identify, treat and prevent developmental delays	Toddlers up to age 3 with their mothers,
	Center for enrichment and stimulation to promote and reinforce child-parent interaction	Toddlers up to age 3 with their mothers,
	Support in areas of nutrition, hygiene, accident prevention, treating common childhood illnesses, and population-appropriate explanations of health matters	Mothers of children in early childhood
Child development in early childhood educational frameworks	Developmental enrichment to advance the children, professionalize the educational staff, and promote parental involvement in educational frameworks	Children aged 1-3 in daycare and home-based child care services, caregivers and parents
Establishing early childhood educational frameworks (ages 1-3)	Educational daycare centers ("kat-gan") ¹¹ for young children in which the parents are involved	Children aged 1-3 and their parents
Language development	Various programs developed at different cities in collaboration with education colleges and language experts for use in preschools.	Children aged 3-6, workshops for parents, culturally sensitive training for preschool teachers
Identification, treatment and prevention in socio-emotional development	<i>Yada'im</i> [Hands] of the Shiluvim Association, emotional group work through the Psychological Service in Schools, the Elbaum Program, developmental units for individual treatment of linguistic, emotional, social and motor aspects	Children aged 3-12, parents
Enrichment	Enrichment programs on the culture and folklore of Ethiopian Israelis in educational frameworks and community centers, in music, art, sports and general knowledge	Children aged 3-12 and parents
Programs for parents and children, parenting and family	Guidance for parents in educational and treatment frameworks – individual and group work; guidance programs and support in the home Hands-on activities to strengthen the child-parent bond: Family experience: parent, child, playing and storytelling at daycare and enrichment centers Art workshops: parents teach children traditional art <i>Yahalom</i> ("diamond"): children and parents together study Judaic texts and content	Children aged 3-12 and their parents

¹¹ The model of the Ministry of Education preschool division adapted for Ethiopian-Israelis

Health promotion at family health centers	Developing a series of culturally sensitive programs and services with the involvement of a permanent inter-disciplinary staff from the facility, the support of an Ethiopian-Israeli health liaison and experts in development, in partnership with community, education and social services	Children from birth to age 3 with the support of mothers
Neighborhood center enrichment for parents and children in the neighborhood	Developing a concept of community work at the neighborhood center, a building adapted for joint afternoon enrichment activities for parents and children, and for the provision of services for parents, under the auspices of a community social worker and neighborhood worker from the community or as a branch of the local community center in the morning. The center implements a series of services for parents in the areas of language acquisition, integration into the working world, parenting etc.	Families with children aged 3-12
Caseworker	Individual families in the care of social services that have the potential to become independent and function normatively in the community are paired with a social worker on the basis of a defined, adapted intervention program and defined goals	Families with children aged 3-12
Cultural mediation	Developing the profession of cultural mediation in various areas of specialization in order to connect the community, particularly parents, with professionals and encourage normative service consumption. For example: A health mediator at the family health facilities; An education mediator for toddlers in daycare; An education mediator for preschool; A neighborhood community mediator	Ethiopian professionals working in different services
School psychologist to support the system	Conceiving the role of the school psychologist as a consultant to the education staff, with a system-wide overview of all the internal and external organizational agents treating the individual by means of a culturally-appropriate approach	Children aged 6-12 and the education staff at school
School social worker	Conceiving the role of the caseworker as integrating treatment, working within the school in cooperation with all the school agents dealing with a child and family	Children aged 6 to 12 and their parents, as well as the education staff at school
Homeroom and preschool teachers as reinforcers for the acquisition of learning and language skills	Training the permanent education staff in the role of reinforcement with the emphasis on culturally sensitive teaching of Hebrew as a second language and imparting tools for differential teaching	Education staff in kindergarten and school education frameworks

Source: Aridan and Margolin, 2012

Appendix 2: Cities and Age Cohorts Included in the Study Each Year

City	Age	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Beer-sheva	3	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				+
	6	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+			+
	8				+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Rehovot	3		+	+	+	+	+	+				+
	6			+	+	+	+	+	+			+
	8				+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Hadera	3				+	+	+	+				
	6			+	+	+	+	+	+			
	8				+	+	+	+	+	+		
Netanya	3				+	+	+	+				+
	6			+	+	+	+	+	+			+
Ramle	6			+		+		+	+			
Afula	6			+			+	+	+			+
Ashkelon*	3	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+
	6	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	8				+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

* In Ashkelon, implementation of the project (PACT only) began in 2008. Prior to that year, "+" indicates that Ashkelon served as the comparison city for these age cohorts.