

Initiatives and Projects

# TRAPPED IN A CONSPIRACY OF SILENCE

The **MeHalev initiative**, whose goal is to prevent child abuse, was born out of a desire to reduce the incidence of abuse and neglect, which is one of the Haruv Institute's main objectives | Anat Ophir

Abuse can occur anywhere, regardless of socio-economic status, religion or gender. In other words, it is a social epidemic. In Israel, as in many countries around the world, there has been some progress in identifying, recognizing and treating children who are victims of abuse and neglect. This is not the case when it comes to prevention of the phenomenon. Regrettably, we still lack the knowledge, programs and resources that would help in reducing the number of children who are victimized on a daily basis. Why is it so important to talk about prevention?

- Child abuse and neglect have grave consequences for children, including death.
- Intervention by all professions and the general public is required in order to contend with the scope of this phenomenon and reduce it.
- We cannot deal with this issue unless we act and invest in it, while combining prevention, detection and therapy.
- Every shekel we invest in preventing the phenomenon and in limiting its scope will save much larger sums in the future, money which can be invested in treating and rehabilitating victims and violators alike.

The MeHalev initiative was launched in 2015 with the goal of diminishing the extent of abuse and neglect of children in Israel and improving the ways different systems contend with the issue. MeHalev is managed by the Haruv Institute, working closely with several organizations and government ministries. It is funded by EBS-Israel, a high-tech company, and by the Schusterman Foundation-Israel. This combined model increases the impact of the initiative in its efforts to effect a long-term systematic change.

**How does the MeHalev initiative work to reduce child abuse and neglect?**

The initiative runs an ongoing media campaign, in collabo-

ration with the Israeli National Council for the Child, which aims to increase public awareness of child abuse and the requirement to report it. The campaign mainly disseminates short video films and online content on social networks, backed by stories and interviews in the traditional media.

MeHalev also developed an accelerator program called "One in Five" for promoting initiatives aimed at preventing child abuse and neglect, in collaboration with HUSart, the Hebrew University's Entrepreneurship Center. The program includes professionals from various areas who wish to try out innovative ideas for preventing child maltreatment. The working model is taken from the worlds of high-tech and technology, which encourage entrepreneurial and creative thinking for finding solutions for diverse problems. In January 2018, the first cycle of the program ended, with a new one starting next April.

The initiative has also developed, together with the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute, an index to be used in measuring abuse. This index will be able to provide important information about the extent of the phenomenon in Israel, and will enable the monitoring of long-term changes.

In addition, MeHalev works to promote legislation aimed at reducing the harm inflicted on children. This is being done in collaboration with the Israeli National Council for the Child.

*If you know a child who is being abused, don't hesitate: call the Israeli National Council for the Child at 02-6780606. The Welfare Center is at Extension 118.*



me-halev.org.il



Mehalev

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From the MeHalev campaign to prevent child abuse



Photo: Red Bird, Peer Levin