WRITTEN EVIDENCE SUBMITTED BY HAND IN HAND: CENTER FOR JEWISH-ARAB EDUCATION IN ISRAEL (HIH)

SUMMARY

- Hand in Hand’s mission is to create a strong and inclusive shared society in Israel by (1) enabling Jewish and Arab children to study together in bilingual schools with a multicultural educational model that teaches respect and tolerance, and (2) creating community leadership and a range of community building events for Jewish and Arab adults which establishes a social movement beyond the walls of the school.

- Starting in 1998 with two schools and 50 children, HIH in 2013-14 has grown to five bilingual schools (Jerusalem, Galilee, Wadi Ara, Haifa, and Jaffa) with 1,080 Jewish and Arab students in grades K-12. Around each school HIH is developing a framework of shared community events to build an integrated and inclusive community. This is a singular accomplishment in a society that generally finds Arabs and Jews living apart, studying in separate institutions, and having minimal contact, a situation which fosters mistrust, reinforces stereotypes and perpetuates conflict between the two groups.

- Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot succeed without both sides recognizing the legitimacy of the other nation and the other’s narrative. Bringing the Jewish and Arab populations together periodically for coexistence encounters and dialogue has proven to be insufficient. Hand in Hand’s growing network of bilingual schools and integrated communities are creating frameworks which encourage mutual recognition between Jews and Arabs and demonstrate the viability of shared living.

- HIH bilingual schools are amongst the only places in Israel where Jews and Arabs engage on a daily basis in an environment of tolerance and mutual respect. The schools supplement the standard core curriculum with several key components: a bilingual teaching model with Hebrew and Arabic-speaking co-teachers; a shared calendar, learning about and celebrating the holidays of each culture; as well as a multicultural curriculum.

- Although Hand in Hand schools are approved, supervised and supported by the Ministry of Education, Hand in Hand must raise an additional $2.7 million in order to: support its bilingual co-teaching model; provide pedagogic training of its new and veteran teachers; develop and oversee supplementary multicultural curricula that educates for an inclusive civic society promoting equality and mutual respect; and use the momentum started inside the school to develop active communities that will widen the circles of influence beyond the school.

- In order to widen its impact beyond the school setting, HIH designs and implements community building events in the five locations in which it currently has schools. The goals of this Shared Communities Program are: to establish a wide range of Jewish-Arab community activities, from sports and culture, to dialogue, study and responding to discriminatory events. In new locations the communities play a central role in helping open new schools.
• Over the next ten years, Hand in Hand aims to create a network of 10-15 integrated bilingual schools, supported and enhanced by active communities, involving some 20,000 Israeli citizens. These visibly integrated shared communities will not only help HIH schools succeed and expand, but will also show the broader public that Israel can be a diverse democratic state where Jews and Arabs live together peacefully.

• HIH asks that a larger portion of UK government funds be granted to organizations like HIH which have succeeded through its bilingual, multicultural schools and community centered activities in bringing together Jews and Arabs on a daily basis, improving the relationships between them, and developing trust and respect for one another. In this way we will build a strong civil society in Israel that embodies the values of inclusiveness and equality.

**Hand in Hand’s Mission**

1. The mission of Hand in Hand: The Center for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel (HIH) is to create a strong and inclusive shared society in Israel by (1) enabling Jewish and Arab children to study together in bilingual schools with a multicultural educational model that teaches respect and tolerance, and (2) developing community leadership and a range of community building events for Jewish and Arab adults which creates a social movement beyond the walls of the school. Starting in 1998 with two schools and 50 children, HIH in 2013-14 has grown to five bilingual schools (Jerusalem, Galilee, Wadi Ara, Haifa, and Jaffa) and 1,080 Jewish and Arab students in grades K-12. Around each school HIH is developing a framework of shared community events to build an integrated and inclusive community. This is a singular accomplishment in a society that generally finds Arabs and Jews living apart, studying in separate institutions, and having minimal contact, a situation which fosters mistrust, reinforces stereotypes, and perpetuates conflict between the two groups.

**Conflict resolution requires daily interaction**

2. Resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will require political creativity and resolve, but it cannot succeed without both sides recognizing the legitimacy of the other nation and the other’s narrative. HIH focuses its efforts on the Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel (the latter often considering themselves Palestinian citizens as well). The creation of an inclusive society between Jews and Arabs living within Israel’s current borders is contingent upon both sides legitimating the other. This process of mutual recognition will improve relations and understanding between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and illustrate the viability of shared living. This is applicable not only to Jews and Arabs in Israel but to Israelis and Palestinians on both sides of the conflict as well.

3. Bringing the Jewish and Arab populations together periodically for coexistence encounters and dialogue has proven to be insufficient. Daily contact starting in pre-kindergarten, in a safe environment where ongoing relationships and friendships can be developed is crucial. Providing the tools to deal with differences in perspectives is vital. Hand in Hand believes that the daily,
positive and meaningful interaction of its Jewish and Arab students, teachers, and parents taking place in its bilingual schools, and the connections and social awareness being developed between community members as a result of community building events, will create shared social and civic frameworks between Jews and Arabs that will alter Israeli society.

4. HIH bilingual schools are amongst the only places in Israel where Jews and Arabs engage on a daily basis in an environment of mutual respect, with Hebrew and Arabic-speaking teachers, a shared calendar to celebrate the holidays of each culture, as well as a multicultural curriculum. Our students excel academically, winning competitions in science and spelling bees, and achieving above average scores on the matriculation exams. HIH’s bilingual multicultural educational model also fosters understanding and friendship while breaking down barriers between Arab and Jewish youth, and promotes civic responsibility in its students.

Special Elements in HIH Schools

5. Although Hand in Hand schools are approved, supervised and supported by the Ministry of Education, Hand in Hand must raise an additional $2.7 million in order to add special elements to promote the bilingual education and social values that are its reason for being:

A. HIH uses a bilingual co-teaching model of instruction with Jewish and Arab speaking teachers working as equal partners. Students learn to speak, read, and write in both Hebrew and Arabic. In this environment, no one feels that their language is second best, everyone is on an equal footing. Students are able to have more meaningful dialogues, to be proud of their own identity while being respectful of the other’s.

B. The schools use a shared calendar that includes the holidays of the three religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, with students learning customs and songs associated with all the holidays, those that they celebrate as well as those that their friends celebrate.

C. Special supplementary multicultural curricula developed by HIH’s Education Department are used to teach the culture and values of all three religions (Jewish, Christian and Muslim), explore the different historical narratives, and educate for an inclusive civic society that promotes equality and mutual respect.

D. In many subjects, such as music and art, students are exposed to both eastern and Western traditions enabling both Jewish and Arab students to learn about their own and each other’s cultures, to express themselves both individually and within the context of their traditions, and to deepen the interpersonal bond between students by their collaborating to create something shared.

E. The educational staff addresses the complexity of being part of communities in conflict, which arises either through events such as the National days (Memorial Day, Independence Day), which by their very nature highlight the two different narratives or during periods of escalation in the violent conflict that surrounds us. Because of the commitment of all parties to tolerance and to respect the other, a moment that otherwise
could be one of divisiveness, turns into a deeper experience of connectedness. As one student noted:

*The events that happened in Gaza and the south in 2008, was the first time that I personally had to deal with a politically sensitive issue as a mature person... Going to school that same day was difficult, but ...the teachers had all kinds of activities prepared to help us discuss our feelings and thoughts, and I felt my opinions were heard and respected by all students. This experience was important to me, because it tested the true values of the school, and I realized that things happen and they might be tough, but we are equipped with the best tools to handle them, by listening and respecting. I think this has really shown me that we don’t live in a bubble where everything is perfect, we live in the real world, where horrible things happen sometimes, but we learn how to handle them in the best way.*

**Role of HIH’s Education Department**

6. Achieving academic excellence and promoting civic responsibility at HIH schools requires properly trained staff who can provide civic and pedagogical leadership, utilize HIH’s unique co-teaching model and can implement multicultural curricula which teach tolerance and civic responsibility. To this end, HIH has created an Education Department. HIH teachers, both veteran and new, receive special pedagogic training so that they are able to work as equals within the co-teaching model, learn to integrate both the core and supplementary curricula into their teaching, and are equipped to manage the issues of culture and difference that arise. This training involves both working closely with individual staff in particular schools, as well as bringing the educational staff from all of HIH’s country-wide network of schools together for an intensive three-day conference in order to share ideas, problem solve, and learn from each other’s experiences. Since HIH’s Jewish and Arab teachers are essentially civic leaders who are training the next generation, it is vital that the teaching staff from all five HIH bilingual schools strategize together as to the best practices for achieving their goals.

7. In addition to training and supervising the educational staff, the Education Department develops the multicultural supplementary curricula used by HIH schools such as the Religious Cultural Heritage Curriculum which enables students from all three faiths of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity to study religious and cultural issues together and an History Curriculum that includes narratives of both populations. The Education Department has also developed a Principals’ Forum, an institutional framework for bringing together principals, vice-principals and senior staff from all of the bilingual schools to learn from each other, share problems and insights, and develop concepts and methodologies together in the field of bilingual, multicultural education.

**Role of Community Activities Program**

8. In order to widen its impact beyond the school setting, HIH is also designing and implementing community building events in the five locations in which it currently has schools.
The goals of this Shared Communities Program are: to establish a wide range of Jewish-Arab community activities, from sports and culture to dialogue, study and responding to discriminatory events, and open the community activity to all who are interested. In new locations the communities play a central role in helping open new schools.

9. As of March 2012 HIH had 3 bilingual schools in Jerusalem, Wadi Ara, and the Galilee. Thanks to three-year core funding from the United States government’s U.S. Agency for International Development and with matching funds, HIH launched its Shared Community Project. The goal of this project is to establish community leadership and structures, and develop a range of vibrant community activities (from sports, culture, family activities and excursions, to dialogue groups, language study, and responding to discriminatory events) that will create a civic infrastructure for social inclusion and civic equality beyond the walls of the school.

10. In March 2012 HIH selected Jaffa and Haifa as its two new communities. The Shared Community Project staff developed local leadership and together they designed activities to fit the needs and interests of the Jewish and Arab populations in these communities. Parents and children participated in cultural events, holiday celebrations, and community gardening; adults enrolled in Arab and Hebrew language classes, participated in dialogue sessions, and played on integrated basketball teams. They got to know one another and formed friendships. As a result of these interactions, the Jaffa and Haifa communities strengthened the bonds between Jews and Arabs, enabling them to cooperate and open a bilingual pre-kindergarten in each of their communities in September 2013 with an equal number of Jewish and Arab children enrolled and with hundreds on waiting lists.

11. The community organizers will continue to develop and run local activities for the more veteran communities to insure strong parental involvement, a growing student body, and joint Jewish and Arab communal life. They will help insure that the new bilingual schools in Jaffa and Haifa continue to grow with another grade each year, and will continue to develop and maintain relationships with the Municipality and the Ministry of Education. They will also help start new communities and new schools.

Country-Wide Community Event

12. Community organizers are also responsible for organizing an annual event, bringing together the Hand in Hand communities from all around the country. HIH piloted a country-wide event around Ramadan for the first time in July 2013 and it was a huge success. HIH expected 250 people, but closed registration with 650 Arabs and Jews coming from all over the country. The program included a public discussion with a Rabbi, a Sheikh and a Priest about the notion of fasting and forgiving in the three religions as well as musical performances. Bringing community leaders together for the planning of such an event empowers them as they realize that they are
part of something much bigger than their own community. They are able to share stories of success and failure and learn from each other’s experiences.

**Publicizing HIH’s Successes**
13. While our bilingual schools and shared communities demonstrate that it is possible for Jews and Arabs to peacefully coexist, interact, and become friends, the experience of cooperation that we have demonstrated will have a limited impact if it remains known only to those who have personally experienced it. Therefore, HIH has hired an Organizational Journalist to join the team, and help publicize our story of an inclusive society to as wide an audience as possible in Hebrew, English and Arabic. HIH’s “doing” in the bilingual schools and in the shared communities will inform the telling, which will illustrate the viability of inclusion, shared society and equality. This will counter the feelings of helplessness and despair that exists in no small part because of the media’s highlighting negative stories. Our stories that appear in radio segments, television reports, in the Israeli and international press, and on Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/HandinHandil](https://www.facebook.com/HandinHandil) provide a powerful message that a different reality is possible in Israel.

**Vision for the Future**
14. Over the next ten years, Hand in Hand aims to create a network of 10-15 integrated bilingual schools, supported and enhanced by active communities, altogether involving some 20,000 Israeli citizens. These visibly integrated shared communities will not only help HIH schools succeed and expand, but will also show the broader public that the experience of social inclusion and mutual respect is viable not only for students but also for all citizens. Israel can be a diverse democratic state where Jews and Arabs live together peacefully.

**Request for Funding**
15. To accomplish its goals HIH must locate additional sources of funding. While it has submitted requests to the British Embassy, it has not been awarded funding in recent years. HIH asks that a larger portion of UK government funds be granted to organizations like HIH which have succeeded through its bilingual, multicultural schools and community-oriented activities in bringing together Jews and Arabs on a daily basis, improving the relationships between them, and developing trust and respect for one another. In this way we will build a strong civil society in Israel that embodies the values of inclusiveness and equality – values that were the foundation of the State of Israel. As Lord Janner of Braunstone, a Member of the UK House of Lords, stated in a parliamentary debate on how to strengthen civil society in the Middle East held in February 2013:

*I am honored to have visited a Hand in Hand school, and to witness students sitting together, learning Arabic and Hebrew, becoming friends and working and learning together. A remark from a mother of a student attending one of these schools sums up their importance: ‘Our political leaders talk about peace. The school that we have started together as Arabs and Jews ... is making peace, building it every day.*
every hour.” That is certainly correct. The role of civil society must continue to
expand in partnership with proactive institutions such as Hand in Hand. We need to
ensure that NGOs and other organizations have the essential funding that is vital.