



JDC-Brookdale Institute
Center for Children and Youth
Research Program on Immigrant Absorption

Integration of Ethiopian Immigrants into Israeli Society:

Challenges, Programs and Policies, and Future Directions

Executive Summary

The JDC-Brookdale Institute prepared this paper as part of a joint process with the UJA-Federation of New York for use in consultation with groups and organizations involved in the absorption of Ethiopian Immigrants in Israel

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Integration of Ethiopian immigrants into



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Preface

The JDC-Brookdale Institute prepared this overview of the integration of the Ethiopian population in Israel in cooperation with the UJA-Federation of New York as a basis for consultations with groups and organizations involved in the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel. The comments obtained during these extensive meetings were invaluable in the preparation of this final report. It is designed to serve as a basis for setting priorities. A broad overview of an issue of such great complexity by definition cannot do justice to the many aspects of the issues and the many activities and parties involved. The JDC-Brookdale Institute is solely responsible for what has been written in this paper and apologies for any unintentional oversights and inaccuracies. We welcome your comments and see this paper as another step in our common efforts to better understand the complexities of Ethiopian immigrant integration in Israel and our shared goal to ensure the success of Ethiopians and Israeli society in meeting the challenges.

We would like to thank the UJA-Federation of New York, especially Gary Rubin, Managing Director, and Stephen Donshik, Director, and Ilan Halperin, Senior Overseas Executive, of the Israel office, for their initiative, close cooperation and input in this process.

We would also like to thank all the organizations and individuals who generously contributed information and their perspectives to the writing of this paper. In particular we would like to cite the contributions of Negiste Mengasha, Director of the FIDEL Association for Education and Social Integration of Ethiopian Jews in Israel, and Shula Mula, Director of the Israel Association for Ethiopian Jews (IAEJ).

The paper, prepared simultaneously in Hebrew and English, was written by a team of the staff of the Brookdale Institute which included: Talal Dolev, Yehudit King, Deborah Kusmerski, Chen Lipshitz, Yoa Leitner, Nurit Nirel and Susan Sawicki. Anat Berberian, Eileen Kaplan, Jenny Rosenfeld and Marsha Weinstein of Brookdale's Editorial Unit and Riki Cohen, Ayelet Gvir, Yael Ruhman, Tali Shlomi and Beth Zisman of Brookdale's secretarial staff contributed greatly to the preparation of this paper. We would like to thank all of Brookdale's staff, who participated in this project under great time pressure and with great dedication.

Prof. Jack Habib
Director

I. Introduction and Summary

Some 15 years have passed since the first wave of immigration from Ethiopia arrived in Israel. During this period, many efforts and initiatives were undertaken, both by the government and by the range of voluntary organizations involved in supporting the Ethiopian population to integrate into Israeli society. However, this process is far from being completed. As can be expected in light of the large cultural and educational gaps that need to be bridged during this process, many challenges still lay ahead. The main purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive picture of the situation of the Ethiopian population in Israel, the current policies aimed at supporting and enhancing their integration into Israeli society and, against this background, to point out some of the major challenges and possible directions for meeting these challenges.

Broad Perspectives that Emerged from the Analysis

In the 1990s, there was significant progress in educational achievements, enrollment in higher education, and achievement within the army, as well as the fuller involvement of the community at the national and local levels. This progress was in large part due to significant changes in policy, to enhanced investment of resources, and to the many efforts of the community and its leadership.

At the same time, these gains, and further progress, are threatened by several significant factors:

1. The deterioration in the national employment situation and the widening of economic gaps since 1996. We do not have data on the impact of these changes on the employment and income of Ethiopian immigrants. National data clearly show that the economic changes are particularly affecting less skilled sectors of the population and geographic areas where the Ethiopian population is concentrated.
2. The pullback of the voluntary sector from major investment in the Ethiopian population, which has been most dramatic in employment and health and, more recently, in higher education. The decline in funding has also led to reduced involvement of the voluntary sector in initiating, disseminating and implementing programs, and thus has weakened the infrastructure for service development and implementation. In some cases, the knowledge of what works and how to make things work has also been lost.
3. The weakening of the voluntary organizations under the leadership of the Ethiopian community, due to reduced philanthropic funding.
4. The growing concentration of Ethiopian immigrants in cities, neighborhoods and schools as a result of the new waves of immigrants that are arriving.
5. Another issue of special concern is that of conditions that the more recent waves of immigrants are facing and the prospects of a major increase in the numbers arriving, which will give rise to major strains. A serious concern is that the immigrants develop a reliance on public assistance rather than becoming integrated into the labor force.
6. Changes that are occurring in the school system are contributing to a growing concentration of Ethiopian children in weaker schools. These schools are being further weakened, as stronger students leave them in larger numbers.

Addressing the threats posed by these forces and ensuring the continued progress of the Ethiopian community will require the resources, creative energies and serious commitment of the public and voluntary sectors. It will also require that we closely monitor the progress of the Ethiopian community and the effectiveness of our efforts.

Moreover, the strengths of the Ethiopian population are playing an important role in overcoming the many obstacles. We can build on these strengths as we look ahead in addressing this complex challenge. The findings from the Brookdale Institute's Ethiopian youth survey as well as evidence from many professionals in the field indicate the following:

- ◆ Children – with the support of their parents -- are highly motivated to succeed in school and have very high aspirations both with respect to both their levels of educational achievement and future occupational roles.
- ◆ Both parents and youth are highly aware that succeeding in the educational system is one of the major means for social mobility in Israel, and therefore is of great importance. The youth feel that their success depends mainly on factors related to their own efforts, talents and educational achievements. They place very little emphasis on external factors that do not depend on their own efforts, such as luck, or being an Ethiopian. These attitudes are much stronger among the youth than among the parents.
- ◆ The youth place greater emphasis in their value system on the importance of contributing to society than do their non-immigrant peers. One concrete expression of this is the rate at which they volunteer for combat units in the army.

Another important source of strength is the increased numbers of Ethiopians in higher education, which in turn is yielding a significant expansion of the leadership base of the Ethiopian community.

Finally, many citizens, professionals, and public figures in Israel are highly committed to the integration of Ethiopian immigrants and devote their time and energies to this goal. These efforts receive considerable support and reinforcement from the worldwide Jewish community. The efforts of these forces, combined with those of the Ethiopian community, are the basis for success in this important, shared challenge.

Structure of the Paper

This document is structured according to the significant challenges currently facing the Ethiopian population. The first chapter describes the major characteristics of the Ethiopian population in Israel. Subsequent chapters address major areas of Ethiopian integration and discuss the following:

- ◆ What are the challenges and goals?
- ◆ What do we know about the nature of the problems and what has been achieved?
- ◆ What have been the policies and interventions?
- ◆ What are current or emerging initiatives?
- ◆ What are possible strategic directions?

II. Background

There are five major areas that affect the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants to Israel: the immigrants' personal and family characteristics and culture; transition processes and initial absorption in Israel; the socio-economic situation in Israeli society; general social policies; and absorption policies in general and with respect to these immigrants.

Special Difficulties

1. The immigrants from Ethiopia brought with them social and economic resources which make it difficult for them to integrate into Israeli society: many of them have no education, most were employed as agricultural workers in Ethiopia, and most have only a limited acquaintance with the educational and employment frameworks of modern Israeli society.
2. The immigrants came from a different culture, where the patterns of relationship within the family, the status of children, living arrangements and patterns of mutual support were very different.
3. The structure of Ethiopian families differs from that of non-immigrant Israeli families. These families have large numbers of children, and there are many single-parent families. Further, two characteristics are almost unique to Ethiopian families: single-parent families with three or more children, and many fathers with children under eighteen who are themselves over sixty-five.
4. The transition from Ethiopia to Israel was lengthy and fraught with misfortunes. The immigrants that came in "Operation Moses" experienced many tragedies and traumas during their journey through Sudan. The immigrants that came in "Operation Solomon" went through many transitions, both during the process of immigration and during their initial period in Israel. This process weakened the community and its leadership, and caused a disintegration of the traditions and life-styles that prevailed in Ethiopia and a breakdown of some of the family frameworks.
5. Learning Hebrew turned out to be a complicated challenge for these immigrants, and the task of teaching them Hebrew became a challenge to Israeli society. This goal has been achieved only partially, and a high percentage of the adult population is still unable to hold a simple conversation in Hebrew.
6. The immigrants were mostly settled in peripheral localities and in disadvantaged neighborhoods, where they may be found in large concentrations. These areas offer fewer opportunities to the immigrants in all areas of life, and have more difficulty in dealing with the needs of the Ethiopian immigrants.
7. Lack of education, lack of acquaintance with Israeli patterns of employment, and difficulty in acquiring the Hebrew language have made it difficult for these immigrants to find work. Many of the adults, particularly younger ones and those who have been in Israel longer, have succeeded in finding work despite these difficulties. However, the percentage of those not working and the percentage of unemployed are very high compared to the overall Jewish population. The gap is much wider among women and among immigrants who are over 45. This situation affects the immigrants' economic status as well as their ability to fully integrate into Israeli society. Due to special, intensive efforts, a significant proportion of Ethiopians has

succeeded in becoming integrated into skilled or semi-skilled employment, although there is a very high concentration of Ethiopian immigrants in non-skilled, low-wage occupations.

8. The absorption of the Ethiopian immigrants in Israel in the 90s took place at a time when Israeli society was facing critical social, economic and political challenges: the wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union, significant periods of high unemployment levels, the widening of social gaps, and an increase in the extent of poverty. These trends have affected the situation of the Ethiopian immigrants as well as the conditions they had to face during the process of their absorption.

Strengths

1. The Ethiopian immigrants brought with them a strong Zionist belief and great motivation to become integrated in Israel. This contributed to their ability to face the difficulties of the absorption process.
2. The general positive attitude of many Israelis toward the Ethiopian immigrants, and Israeli society's willingness to see these immigrants as entitled to special assistance, over and above other groups.
3. The mobilization of the voluntary and private sectors in Israel and in the Diaspora.
4. The emergence of young professional leadership in the community, which has dedicated itself to the advancement of the community.

We go on to summarize some of the key data. Our attempts to address the challenges of Ethiopian immigration have been hampered by the very limited data available. Only two broader efforts were made to examine the situation of the Ethiopians (by the Brookdale Institute): a 1993 census in three cities with large concentrations of Ethiopians, and a 1997 national study of immigrant youth and their families (Lifshitz, Noam and Segal, 1997; Lifshitz, Noam and Habib, 1997).

In this report, we are for the first time taking advantage of the opportunities provided by an additional data source -- the 1995 National Census of Israel -- which provides a broader, if somewhat dated, picture.

Demographic Structure and Social Capital

The census data enable us to obtain a national perspective in a number of important areas and to examine the existence and extent of significant differences between recent and earlier Ethiopians due to differences in the immigrants' background characteristics at the time of arrival or differences that emerge over time in Israel. For example, the number of single-parent families might be influenced by patterns of family break-up in Israel.

The overall status of the population is also affected by the ratio of new to veteran immigrants, which keeps changing with subsequent waves of immigration and the rate of growth of the immigrant population already in Israel. We present the latest available national estimates of the structure of the Ethiopian population by age and length of time in Israel in Tables 1 and 2, based on unpublished data from the Central Bureau of Statistics.

Table 1: Ethiopian Population by Age – End of 1998

Age	Thousands	% *
Total	72.4	100.0
0-4	10.0	13.8
5-14	20.5	28.3
15-19	8.9	12.3
20-29	12.4	17.1
30-44	9.9	13.7
45-54	4.2	4.8
55-64	2.6	3.6
65+	3.9	5.4

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Population File, Special Analysis, unpublished

*Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Table 2: Ethiopian Population by Year of Immigration – End of 1998

Immigration	Thousands	% *
Total	72.4	100.0
Israeli born	19.3	26.7
Immigrated before 1990	16.6	22.9
Immigrated from 1990 on	36.6	50.6

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Population File, Special Analysis, unpublished

*Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Of note is the fact that almost 40% of the Ethiopian population is age 19 or under, reflecting the large number of children per family. The majority of Ethiopian immigrants arrived in Israel in the 1990s. Moreover, a significant number were born in Israel, either to families that arrived recently or families that arrived in the 80s.

Family Structure and Size – Unique Features

- ◆ Some 60% of families with children have five or more children (ages 0-18)
- ◆ 20 % of families with children are single-parent
- ◆ A large percentage of single-parent families have three or more children
- ◆ A large percentage of the children have a father over age 65, because of the large age gap between husbands and wives.

Education

- ◆ Many adults had no education prior to their arrival in Israel and were illiterate in their native language
- ◆ Most children had very limited schooling, in both quantity and quality.

Hebrew Proficiency

The background factors noted above affect the immigrants' ability to learn Hebrew.

- ♦ A large percentage (about 45%) of Ethiopian immigrant parents are unable to hold a simple conversation in Hebrew, and most (about 75%) are unable to read or write simple Hebrew. This is true even of a large proportion of those who have been in the country for a relatively long time.
- ♦ The immigrants' success in learning Hebrew has been limited.

The Status of Children

A key indicator of the challenges facing the education system is the children's family background. Table 3 presents the percentages of children whose parents or families are characterized by certain background traits. We focus on education, single-parent families, the presence of a wage earner, and the age of the father.

**Table 3: Ethiopian and Total Jewish Children by Key Background Characteristics - 1995:
Percentage of All Children**

	Ethiopian Children	Total Jewish Children
Father's education		
- No education	61.0	3.3
- Education 1-8 years	20.0	14.7
- Education 13 + years	5.6	35.0
% single-parent families	18	10
% no earner	41	9
% father over age 65	11	0.5
% father over age 45	49	24

Source: JDC-Brookdale Institute, special analysis of 1995 National Census of the Central Bureau of Statistics

The data in the Table illustrate the significant differences in the family backgrounds of Ethiopian versus other Jewish children. For example, 61% of Ethiopian children live in a family in which the head of the household has had no education, compared to only 3.3% of the Jewish children. A less well-known fact is that the heads of Ethiopian families tend to be much older, indeed, 11% of Ethiopian children have a father over age 65, compared to 0.5% of the children in the non-Ethiopian population. Forty-one percent of Ethiopian children grow up in a family with no wage earner.

It should be noted that there are differences among families from the various waves of immigration. A survey of families of Ethiopian youth indicated that the situation of families that came to Israel before or during 1990 is better than that of later immigrants with respect to salary, overall family income, parents' proficiency in Hebrew and parents' rate of employment. However, children in "newer" families (those that have immigrated since 1991) rank higher on indicators of integration

into education such as achievement in math and integration into scholastic tracks that lead to matriculation, and have lower drop-out rates (Lifshitz, et al., 1998).

Economic Status

The more limited integration of the Ethiopians into the labor force combined with their need to support large families affects their economic status.

- ◆ The low income of Ethiopian families has implications for the parents' ability to meet their children's basic needs. For example, many (45%) cannot afford basic expenses such as school supplies (Lifshitz, Noam and Habib, 1998). In many families with young children, there are no toys or books. Many of the children do not have their own bed.
- ◆ As their income is low and they are new to Israel, and have not had time to accumulate goods, Ethiopian immigrants find that furnishing and maintaining their homes is a major challenge. For example, many households lack basic equipment that is in good repair. About 10% lack a working refrigerator or water heater, and about 40% have no means of heating their apartment.

III. Programmatic Principles Common to All Areas of Intervention

In light of the special difficulties faced by the immigrants from Ethiopia, Israel adopted a strategy of affirmative action and from the beginning provided special assistance beyond that available to other immigrants. This is consistent with the overall framework of differential assistance to immigrant groups within absorption policy in Israel.

One of the important factors in absorption policy is the nature of the partnership between the government and the voluntary sectors. The major source of resources and dominant factor is the governmental sector. Yet, in every society, there are not enough resources to meet the needs and there is a struggle to determine priorities from among competing needs. The voluntary sector plays an important role in Israeli society, as it does in other societies, by adding vital resources over and above the publicly allocated funds. Public agencies are also limited in their ability to prefer one population to another and in their ability to implement affirmative action policies. One of the voluntary sector's important roles is to supplement the public sector's activities in this respect. The voluntary sector also has a key role in initiating and implementing programs. The more different a population is from the general population, and the more it requires special attention, the more difficult it is for public systems to manage on their own. Against this background, it is important to emphasize the unique role played by the voluntary sector as an important partner in formulating and implementing policies for the absorption of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel. The Jews of the Diaspora, who are a key partner in the Israeli voluntary sector, have contributed much to these efforts.

From a review of programs and policies in each of the areas, there emerge a number of programmatic directions that are shared in common.

- 1. Coordination and pooling of resources among the different organizations:** There is a great deal of fragmentation in the care of the Ethiopian population, due to the complexity of the organizational structure of the service system. Increasingly, there are attempts to cooperate and pool resources at the national and local levels. This is sometimes around a specific project, and sometimes in addressing a broad area of need, as for example the Educational Coalition. There have been encouraging recent examples that point to the feasibility of these efforts and their potential contribution to more comprehensive and inclusive intervention policies.
- 2. Addressing the needs of the Ethiopian immigrants with heightened sensitivity to their unique culture and their special needs.** In all the areas reviewed, there is increased recognition of the need to develop special approaches adapted to the culture and lifestyle of the Ethiopian immigrants. Implementing this principle in the range of services that serve this population requires a much broader effort to train professionals who come in contact with the Ethiopian population.

In developing strategies to implement this principle, the services are facing two major dilemmas:

- ♦ Should there be separate programs for the Ethiopian population or should they be integrated into programs intended for the entire population?
- ♦ What is the best way to utilize Ethiopian professionals within these programs?

- 3. The development of intervention programs aimed at empowering the Ethiopian community, including reinforcing the status of the traditional leadership and the development of young leadership.** Against the background of the weakening of the fabric of the Ethiopian community, as a result of the process of immigration, it is important to strengthen the community as another source of support to the immigrants in their integration into Israeli society. Programs aimed at empowering the community, and strengthening and developing leadership, have been implemented in a wide range of areas. However, Israel's experience in this area is limited, and it is imperative that efficient approaches be developed, and that these programs be reinforced.
- 4. Addressing the needs of the family in a more comprehensive way:** Until recently, there were few programs and intervention strategies which take into account the influences of change on the fabric of family relationships. This need is particularly important in relation to children and youth. In the full report, we discuss the range of difficulties that the families face and their difficulties in linking up with the service system. The changes taking place in the lifestyle of the Ethiopian family (for example, women joining the general labor force) also have effects on family relationships and need to be addressed. There is therefore a need across the board to develop better ways of serving and including families.

IV. Partnership with the Ethiopian Community and the Role of Ethiopian Grassroots Organizations

There is very strong recognition that involving the Ethiopian community as full partners is an important goal in and of itself, as well as a means to successfully answer the community's needs and integrate it in all areas of life.

Many strides have been made in building effective partnerships with the Ethiopian community. These need to be strengthened and expanded by doing the following:

1. Continuing to provide organizational and other support for the major existing national and local grass roots organizations led by Ethiopians. The Ethiopian organizations play a very important role as both initiators and advocates. However, at present they face many difficulties, including a decline in financial support from philanthropic resources; the need to train and develop more management cadres; and the need to find creative ways to effectively work with and involve the different levels of leadership in the Ethiopian community.
2. Continuing to develop effective approaches to leadership training and activation for various groups in the community.
3. Cultivating a corps of existing and potential professional leaders, who will assume positions of responsibility in national government ministries and organizations and provide them with special support during the first phases of their entry into positions of major responsibility. In order to promote leadership development, it is important to foster the acquisition of management skills, the utilization of information, and an understanding of the various public policy issues relevant to the welfare of the Ethiopian immigrants, as well as to prepare and accompany individuals upon their entry into public positions.

V. Initial Absorption and the Transition to Permanent Housing

The Ethiopian population is the major group today that is not directly integrated into the community, but rather spends its initial period in Israel in absorption centers that are operated by the Jewish Agency and primarily financed by the Ministry of Absorption. This can often last up to two years. The conversion ulpan, in which the Falash Mura participate, further extends the period with respect to this group. The absorption center is a protective environment, which makes life easier for the immigrants in many ways. Naturally, the process of transition from this framework to life in the community and the process of searching for and adjusting to permanent housing represent a complex and often traumatic period for the immigrants.

- ♦ With the ongoing continuing influx of new immigrants, there is a need to reestablish some of the special system of assistance with the process of searching for and purchasing a home.
- ♦ It is necessary to better prepare immigrants in temporary housing for the transition to permanent housing by guiding them on housing issues, household maintenance, and cooperation with their non-Ethiopian Israeli neighbors. It will then be necessary to provide continued guidance to

immigrants in permanent housing while preparing non-Ethiopians for the integration of Ethiopians into their community.

- ◆ Better ways must be found to help immigrants maintain their homes and their physical environment, and to provide them with the household goods they still lack.
- ◆ Efforts should be focused on developing inter-group relations in areas with a large concentration of Ethiopians and other groups through positive shared action.
- ◆ Consideration needs to be given to ways of reducing over-concentration. Some in the Ministry of Absorption have suggested providing special grants or larger mortgages to enable immigrants to move out of concentrated and problem areas.
- ◆ Methods should be developed to assist Ethiopians who have been absorbed in peripheral areas to integrate into educational frameworks at a higher scholastic level. If they are to do so, the immigrants require assistance in a number of
- ◆ areas – transportation, financial assistance, and academic and social integration.
- ◆ Efforts must be expanded to close the remaining caravan sites, and to more comprehensively care for families with complex problems that remain at these sites.
- ◆ Ways must be examined to prepare immigrants for employment, and employment experiences must be initiated at an earlier stage of absorption, while the immigrants are still in absorption centers (see section on employment). This would require cooperation between the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for the ulpanim, and other organizations responsible for immigrant absorption.

VI. Education

There is great awareness of the importance of education and its significant impact on the future integration of Ethiopian immigrants in Israeli society. Consequently, serious efforts have been invested in this area by the Ministry of Education, additional governmental bodies, local authorities and voluntary organizations.

The policy towards the integration of Ethiopian immigrants in the educational system includes three main components: special national programs for Ethiopian immigrants (basic entitlements); national programs for weak students in which Ethiopian immigrants are integrated; and special programs run on the local level by different organizations. In addition, there was a special investment in creating opportunities for obtaining a higher education.

Policies concerning the integration of Ethiopian immigrants have changed over time in part due to the system's responsiveness to criticism from community activists, research findings, and evidence from the field. Key changes in policy that have taken place over the years have included:

- ◆ In the early to mid 1990s, fewer Ethiopian immigrants were referred to boarding schools and state religious schools. Efforts were increased to integrate them into academic tracks in better schools and into programs offering a second opportunity. In addition, there was a greater investment in training teaching staffs to work with Ethiopian students and their parents, and

more support was provided for innovative initiatives to reinforce those schools with high concentrations of Ethiopian students.

- ♦ At the end of the 1990s, cooperative frameworks to increase the involvement of the Ethiopian community were established. These include: The Steering Center and Coalition for the Educational Advancement of Ethiopian Immigrants. During this period, activity in many areas was expanded and special emphasis was placed on reinforcing the relationship between the parents and the school, cultural adaptation, and community empowerment. There was an increased awareness of the development of high drop out rates and high rates of youth at risk and new actions were taken in response.

These policy shifts and enhanced investment of resources led to a number of significant gains, including a dramatic rise in:

- ♦ The percentage of Ethiopian students enrolled in academic and matriculation schools and in the better secondary schools
- ♦ The proportion eligible for matriculation certificates
- ♦ Enrollment in institutions of higher education.

At the same time, a number of challenges remain:

- ♦ There is still a significant gap in the achievements of Ethiopian students compared to those of the general Israeli population.
- ♦ The drop-out rates are high and there is a high rate of “hidden drop-outs” (i.e., those who are absent from school at least one day per week).
- ♦ There is a significant proportion (about one-third) of students experiencing serious difficulty in school.
- ♦ There remain significant difficulties in the links between the parents and the schools.
- ♦ In a cooperative effort of the Ministry of Education and the task force of the educational coalition, led by Ethiopian professionals, a new method was implemented to supervise the utilization of teaching hours allocated to schools for Ethiopian students. It is important that this change be monitored in order to evaluate its success.

There are other sources of concern:

- ♦ Most significant is the fact that due to changes in the educational system, the concentration of Ethiopian children in weaker schools, which become even weaker as stronger students leave, is growing.
- ♦ Many of the students having the most difficulties are still not receiving enough assistance.
- ♦ There have been recent cutbacks in elementary schools programs and in the stipends per student for higher education.
- ♦ Contrary to expectations, there is evidence that immigrant children who arrived in the 1980s are less successful than those who arrived in the 1990s and they have much higher drop-out rates.
- ♦ There is a question about the “quality of the matriculation certificates” received by some of the Ethiopian youth and the extent to which they will serve as an “entry ticket” to institutions of higher education and fields that are in demand.

- ◆ Finally, an overriding concern is that no other disadvantaged group in Israel has succeeded in achieving full educational equality, which emphasizes the complexity of the challenge.

There are a number of directions that could be reinforced in order to address these challenges:

- ◆ Focusing efforts to improve study habits, such as bringing the required books and supplies to class and completing homework, and regular attendance at school, all of which are related school failure
- ◆ Increase intervention in the elementary schools, with an emphasis on those students who have difficulty with basic skills
- ◆ Pay greater attention to critical transition points such as from elementary school to junior high school
- ◆ Strengthen activities of prevention within the framework of the schools and by after school activity
- ◆ Improve and strengthen the relationship between the parents and the educational frameworks.

VII. Early Childhood

In Israel, as in other places in the world, there is a growing awareness of the importance of early childhood as a decisive stage in the development of children and in preparing them for the educational system.

Ethiopian pre-schoolers and their families face unique difficulties:

- ◆ Difficulties in communication between the children and the parents who do not speak Hebrew
- ◆ Discipline difficulties due to changes in educational and cultural norms
- ◆ Difficulties providing enrichment and leisure time activities for the children
- ◆ Economic difficulties which create an impoverished home environment
- ◆ Frustration in fulfilling the parenting role in an unfamiliar society
- ◆ Difficulties in relationships with educational frameworks and receiving assistance for their children
- ◆ There is no comprehensive information on the implications of these difficulties for the development of children. However, data from a national study of children visiting the well-baby clinics indicates that a much high percentage of Ethiopian children aged 0-2 are at risk (8% compared to 2% among the general population).
- ◆ An examination of the service system for preschoolers in Israel indicates many financial obstacles that make it difficult for Ethiopians to integrate into the system.
- ◆ Preschool facilities are not provided free of charge in most localities. Although they are subsidized, substantial participation by the parents is still required. Most of the frameworks for integrating young children aged 0-3 are funded by the parents, and subsidies for working mothers and children at risk are limited. Thus it was found that Ethiopian children tend to participate much less than other Israeli children in early childhood frameworks. Instead of enjoying special enrichment at an early age in order to close the gaps, they actually receive less.

- ◆ Special home-operated programs have been developed in Israel (“ETGAR” “HATAF”) which are geared to disadvantaged populations. Additionally, the ALMAYA Association has pioneered the development of home enrichment programs that are specially adapted to the Ethiopian population. There has been an increase in the dissemination of these programs among the Ethiopian population, but coverage is still limited compared to the needs.
- ◆ A new and unique initiative is the PACT program, which has been operating in Beer Sheva for two years (under the sponsorship of the Jewish Community Federation of Cleveland and JDC-Israel), and is now being disseminated to other localities in Israel. This program is being accompanied by an evaluation study, which, together with other studies being carried out today, will provide more comprehensive information on the needs of children and families, and on desired modes of intervention.

Lessons from the PACT program and other early childhood programs indicate several directions and major challenges for the future:

- ◆ Addressing the need to enrich the home environment
- ◆ Providing support and guidance to help parents develop their parenting skills and improve communication between parents and children
- ◆ Developing approaches to working with parents that involve them in the educational process and build trust with the educational frameworks and promote mutual understanding and dialogue
- ◆ Finding ways to enable parents to be part of the service planning process, so that the services can provide more adequate solutions to their needs
- ◆ Deepening the cultural adaptation of the educational frameworks and the availability and utilization of multi-cultural instructional materials.

VIII. The Families and the Community

- ◆ The special characteristics and challenges facing Ethiopian families place many of them in risk situations. About half the families are known to the social service departments and receive assistance for a variety of needs, ranging from household equipment to help with difficulties in the functioning of the family.
- ◆ Because of the difficulties facing the families, the percentage of Ethiopian children known to the social services is three times the percentage found in the general population, reaching a third of all Ethiopian children.
- ◆ Most Ethiopian families are undergoing changes, such as having less control over their children and experiencing a reversal of roles, whereby the children are required to take on many of the parents’ roles, and the parents are forced to rely on their children in different areas, such as in contacts with the authorities. However, recent research has shown this has not caused a general deterioration in family relationships, as has been claimed.
- ◆ The support for families and children at risk does not meet the needs in terms of the amount of service available and the degree to which the services have been culturally-adapted.

- ◆ This reflects, in part, the more general inadequacies of the social services:
 - The limited scope of social services available to families and children and risk in Israel, which meets only a small portion of the needs
 - The fact that the families are concentrated in poor localities, where social services are even more limited
 - The limited and localized availability of more innovative programs which are focused on the entire range of family needs and which are based more of a partnership with the parents.
- ◆ The policy of the social welfare services to serve the Ethiopians as part of the general services for the overall population, without adequate staff training or the development of culturally-sensitive interventions.

The following major directions need to be pursued in developing services for Ethiopian families and strengthening the family unit:

- ◆ To guarantee a continuum of service provision to the family during the transition from temporary to permanent housing.
- ◆ To increase the staff at local social welfare service bureaus in the community serving Ethiopians. Today, the extent of need and the burden of meeting it have caused "burnout" among workers, and an inability to respond to existing needs.
- ◆ To develop special intervention programs for the Ethiopian community, based on the unique knowledge that has accumulated in existing service frameworks, in cooperation with the local Ethiopian community, and by training social welfare staff. These programs need to emphasize the development of more independence, and preservation of the Ethiopian's heritage.
- ◆ To continue developing and disseminating services that address the needs of families as a whole and to work in partnership with parents.
- ◆ To expand efforts to train professionals and develop culturally-adapted intervention strategies for this population.
- ◆ To engage in programs to empower the community and promote traditional sources of social support (such as the "Shmagilot").
- ◆ To involve Ethiopian professionals and para-professionals in service provision.

IX. Youth at Risk

There are a number of worrying trends among Ethiopian youth.

- ◆ The dropout rate at ages 14-17 is twice that of the general population (6.3%).
- ◆ Is it higher among those youth whose families came in the 1980s.
- ◆ Rates of irregular attendance (hidden dropouts, i.e., those who miss one day or more per week of school) are much higher (14%). There is a very high rate of youth who change schools frequently.
- ◆ The most reliable data on delinquency is for 1996 – a police file was opened for 2.6% of Ethiopian children, as opposed to 1.4% of non-Ethiopian youth.
- ◆ Ethiopian children begin exhibiting patterns of delinquency at an earlier age and have more offences on average than do non-Ethiopian offenders.

There are four broad strategies for addressing the problems of these youth:

- ◆ Preventive programs in schools to address the needs of weaker pupils at risk
- ◆ Rehabilitative efforts for those who have already dropped out or are involved in delinquency, including substance abuse and school violence
- ◆ Preventive efforts through the inclusion of disadvantaged youth in after-school frameworks (community centers, youth movements, etc.)
- ◆ Hotlines and special outreach programs in the community.

The system of services is particularly fragmented for youth at risk and this often leads to a situation in which their needs are only partially addressed. The services also differ in the extent to which they implement separate programs for Ethiopian youth versus integrating them into the more general service and the degree to which they employ specially trained or Ethiopian personnel. Not all the services have addressed the challenge of meeting the special needs of Ethiopian youth at risk.

There are a number of important directions for developing these services:

- ◆ Strengthening the efforts of the police in cooperation with other organizations, particularly in problematic neighborhoods and schools
- ◆ More focused efforts to address the problems of hidden dropouts in the schools
- ◆ Developing approaches to comprehensively address the problems of families with severely problematic youth
- ◆ Strengthening efforts to address the serious problems of girls in distress.

X. Employment

- ◆ Despite the immense challenge, promoting employment and avoiding economic dependence among the immigrants were, from the start, key policy goals.
- ◆ Furthermore, Israel not only set itself a goal of full employment, but also attempted to promote integration into skilled jobs and to encourage suitable employment opportunities for those among the immigrants who were educated.
- ◆ During the decade of 1985-1995, many efforts were invested in this area. In addition to the government's efforts, it is important to note the intensive and unique activity of the voluntary sector, and even the private sector.
- ◆ These efforts led to considerable successes, reflected in the employment rates of the immigrants who came in the 1980s and among the younger immigrants. However, the gaps in the extent of employment relative to the non-Ethiopian population still remain very large and are particularly great for women and older workers.
- ◆ Beginning in the mid-1990s, major changes have occurred, which impacted negatively on the employment status of Ethiopian immigrants.
 - Programs promoting employment were cut back, and some were even closed down completely due to the reduced investment by the government and the voluntary sector. Of particular note is the lack of programs for people with minimal education and who have not been successful in developing Hebrew skills.

- Changes in the economy and in the job market, including a rise in unemployment, an increase in the number of low-skilled foreign workers, scaling down of traditional industries, and a decline in the relative wages of unskilled workers. These changes were particularly greatest in the weaker localities, where there are large concentrations of Ethiopian immigrants.
- The declines in provision of public assistance and in job market opportunities, give rise to the concern that new waves of immigrants will develop patterns of dependency, rather than integrate into employment.

Against the background of existing efforts, a number of key challenges have emerged:

1. At present, there is no comprehensive coordinated employment effort and no clear information as to the extent of coverage of the various populations in need of employment assistance. There is a major new government initiative to establish a more comprehensive integrated inter-ministerial program, but it will be a major challenge to make it a reality at the national and local level.
2. To expand opportunities and upgrade the level of employment for those currently employed in low-skilled occupations.
3. To improve the occupational prospects of new entrants into the labor force with limited educational achievements.
4. To continue to develop effective models for different sub-groups, such as women, or in special areas of employment, such as high-tech.
5. To mobilize the Ethiopian leadership and community around the goal of more successful integration into employment as a critical part of their broader integration into Israeli society.
6. To encourage employers to become active partners in addressing this challenge.
7. To develop new models of programs for new arrivals that integrate ulpan, the conversion process and preparation for and experience in the world of work.

As noted, given the much more competitive and unfavorable market for unskilled and semi-skilled workers, very intensive efforts will be required to repeat the degree of success achieved in the 80s and 90s.

XI. Health Care

- ◆ Poor Hebrew skills, cultural differences, and lack of acquaintance with health concepts that are commonplace in Israeli society, hamper the provision of health services to the Ethiopian population.
- ◆ On the other hand, financial and emotional stress, inadequate nutrition, high incidence of infectious disease, a dramatic increase in the prevalence of "Western" diseases and an acute need for education in the area of health behaviors, require great investment in the provision of adequate health services.
- ◆ A number of programs and interventions adapted to the Ethiopian culture were developed, aimed at promoting the health behaviors of this population and improving relations with, and

utilization of, the health services. However, since no health authority took responsibility for these programs and there was reduced funding from voluntary organizations, many of these programs never got off the ground or were phased out.

- ◆ Thus, a more overall effort is needed, with special emphasis on the following:
 - Employ cross-cultural facilitators in clinics with high concentrations of Ethiopians or on a multi-clinic basis
 - Provide intensive health education efforts for new immigrants, as was done in the past
 - Develop mental health programs, building on the cross-cultural knowledge base that has been developed
 - Take advantage of the trained core of facilitators as a resource that can contribute further to the health system
 - Strengthen existing efforts to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

XII. Army Service

The Army reports almost full recruitment of Ethiopian men, as well as a rate of volunteers to combat units, that is higher than that of the general population. Studies have shown a positive effect of army service on Ethiopian immigrants' identification with Israeli society and even on their identification as Ethiopians, as well. However, the serious problems of Ethiopian families impact, as well, on Army service and thus about 25% do not complete their Army service.

Most of the programs provided by the Army specifically for the Ethiopian population today are either in preparation for army service or for release from the army. A number of directions are being considered by the Army to advance the Ethiopian recruits:

1. To make provisions for all recruits to complete their Bagrut before leaving the Army, with particular emphasis on assistance in more difficult subjects such as math and English. A very successful pilot was completed with the Association for the Advancement of Education and government support and there is an interest in making this available to all recruits, while including a strong dimension of leadership development as well.
2. To expand pre-Army programs. For instance, the Army is considering the expansion of the Gadna program from a week to 2 weeks for Ethiopian youth and to include the parents so as to expose them more to the nature and significance of the Army experience for their children and for them to share in this experience in a more meaningful way.
3. To increase the number of Ethiopian officers. One direction, which has already begun, is focused on women, who are identified and given extra assistance in being accepted in and successfully completing officer's courses. Ten women have already successfully completed the program. An additional program is designed to identify Ethiopians, at the time of entry into the Army, with high potential for officer training and to give them extra assistance in order to realize this potential.
4. To strengthen programs preparing soldiers for release from the army, focusing on vocational/professional training programs, which will enable them to leave the army with a skill.

XIII. Ethiopian Elderly

Another group of families at risk are those headed by an elderly person. Persons age 65 or over are 5% of all Ethiopians and another 4% are 55 and over. There are several unique features of this group in Israel.

1. The Ethiopians age functionally at a much younger age.
2. In contrast to expectations, many elderly do not live with adult children due to the large size of families and crowded conditions.
3. Many families headed by an elderly person still have young children in their care as a result of the large number of total children and the large age gap between husbands and wives.
4. They have the lowest levels of prior education and have the lowest capacity to learn Hebrew. The cultural gap is thus the greatest for this group.
5. They have the greatest rate of disability and health problems and have the greatest difficulties in accessing adequate health services due to the language and cultural barriers. The same is true for other social services.
6. The traditional roles of the elderly in the family and community have been dramatically weakened.

There have been limited efforts to develop programs and services for this group. One of the most important initiatives has been the development of social clubs for the elderly under the auspices of ESHEL and various municipalities. These clubs have been quite successful in providing not only opportunities for socialization but also for linking the elderly to the orientation and information they require. However, these centers are not available in most areas with high Ethiopian concentrations.

Another development of particular importance is the training of Ethiopian health facilitators in the clinics (see the section on Health Care) that has had particular significance for the elderly.

Of particular concern are those elderly who bear responsibility for young children. There has not been a systematic effort to reach out to these families and to assist them in a more comprehensive way.

Against this background it is important to:

1. Expand the network of social clubs
2. Target focused outreach efforts to these families and particularly those with children
3. Strengthen opportunities for the elderly to contribute (see section on the family) to the community.

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The JDC-Brookdale Institute, established in 1974, is Israel's leading center for applied research on human services. It has five major divisions: Aging, Health Policy, Immigrant Absorption, Disability, and the Center for Children and Youth. It is an independent, non-profit organization which is operated as a partnership between the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC) and the Government of Israel.

- ◆ The Institute's primary objective is to improve the delivery of human services in Israel by conducting in-depth research to help define critical service needs and how to address them most effectively. The Institute works closely with national and local government and with the full range of voluntary organizations in Israel. In most cases the Institute's findings are the only significant source of information and serve as the basis for major policy decisions with respect to the human services at both the national and local level.
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