

# SIDRA

September 2019  
August 2020

Emotional - Therapeutic after school  
program for status less children



## Annual Report 2020



In cooperation  
with Mesila.  
Tel- Aviv  
municipality



# SIDRA IN NUMBERS

- 1 Emotional-therapeutic Sidra after-school day-care center for children with emotional and behavioral difficulties.
- 2 Children who left during the year – one child who was transferred to an emergency shelter in the north of the country, and a second child who underwent resettlement to the U.S. with his family.
- 3 Parent-children events in the day-care center.
- 4 Female educational staff members who are completely dedicated to the children.
- 5 Children who underwent placement and inclusion in special education frameworks for the next school year.
- 6 Children who were acknowledged by the Welfare Department and who are now undergoing therapy and receive assistance from official national elements.
- 7 Areas of focus: Formation of the group (September); Security and safety (October); Daily schedule and belonging (November); creative, verbal and emotional expression (December); empathy towards friends (January); playing together (February); multi-cultural and expanding horizons.
- 8 Eight weeks of Corona isolation during which we worked with the children and their families in the homes.
- 9 Families that underwent parenthood training during the year.
- 10 Meetings in small groups to prepare a first grade curriculum for children who will be going into first grade.
- 11 Home visits during June, in order to encourage a return to the framework.
- 12 Group meetings for emotional art expression.
- 13 Meetings with Dr. Hannah Tsur, expert in the treatment of early childhood trauma. She helps us prepare the proper educational solutions for the children.
- 14 Days during which we ate injera cooked by the mother of one of the children and we sang songs in Tigrinia
- 15 Children who received enveloping, inclusive and attentive response.

# OUR TEAM

**Bella Kalvanov:** Coordinator of “Sidra” after-school day-care center. She is responsible for communicating with the parents, for the operation of the center, and for training and guiding the staff. She is a social worker, with a B.A. degree from Ben Gurion University, a graduate of the parenthood-training course in the Adler Institute, and bearer of an M.A. in stress and trauma studies from the Tel Aviv University. Bella is an experienced coordinator at Unitaf. As part of her previous duties, she coordinated Unitaf day-care centers and is part of the social work network of the organization.

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**Yael Geula:** Chief Operating Officer at Unitaf, in charge of the professional administration of the Association. A graduate of the Schwartz program of the Hebrew University. Yael is the “mother” of Sidra – she initiated the idea of the therapeutic day-care center and directed the program throughout the year. She was fully involved in the center, from providing therapy and being in direct contact with the children, to providing professional support for members of the team. Yael’s enterprising spirit and involvement served as milestones for Sidra’s activities throughout the whole year and gave rise to unusual therapeutic and educational processes.

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**Maayan Zimri:** Lead teacher, with experience in managing pre-kindergarten, B.A. in Education and Music studies from the Rimon School. Maayan runs the center on Sundays, Mondays, and Wednesdays. This year, Maayan initiated a project involving photo albums and together with the children in the center, representing happy moments, good days, including children who left us. In addition, Maayan initiated a soccer activity, and every week, together with the staff, takes all of the children from the center to a soccer field outside of the kindergarten for a change in atmosphere and a soccer game, for both boys and girls. During the Corona period, Maayan ran small groups of three children a day, following all Corona safety guidelines.

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**Reut Yaakobov:** Lead teacher and the morning teacher in the group of pre-kindergartens in which the center is located. Reut works on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Motivated by the work in the center, as of next year, Reut will take part in the Schwartz study program to increase her knowledge in the integration of the education and therapeutic worlds. This year, Reut initiated a cooking class with the children and they cooked and baked together every week, and at the end of the day, ate what they had prepared. In addition, Reut interacted individually with the father of one of the children and initiated activities during which the father came to the center and shared his sewing skills, teaching the children to sew, making his son very proud.

**Helen Facehein:** Helen is an Asylum Seeker from Eritrea, a well-known Unitaf mother, very active socially in the community, particularly with the parents of children in the Sidra center. The whole year, Helen was busy reinforcing the social and cultural roots of the children. She would speak to the children in Tigrinia, read books in their mother tongue, teach them and the Israeli staff games from Eritrea, play the music of their country, and cook traditional foods with the children. Helen was a mother figure, warm and embracing all of the children in the center who enjoyed basking in her warmth.

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**Gali Baram:** Educational counselor, with a B.A. in education, democracy and peace, as well as a B.A. in creative early-childhood education. In addition to an M.A. in Education Management and Leadership Gali has a teacher's certificate. In the past, she worked with children of the foreign community as a teacher in a municipal pre-school.

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**Shaked Wax:** Served as a National Service Volunteer in the program. Shaked worked in the center every day and this year introduced a project that prepares the children for first grade. In addition, Shaked was very active in supervising the children during the placement process that was a requirement, and she followed up on the process and mediated for the families.

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**Ronny Oshri** Served as a National Service Volunteer in the program. Ronny worked every day and this year, introduced an art class that consisted of small groups according to motor capabilities. In these groups, the children learned techniques for self-expression and emotional expression through creative materials.

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**Other friends and staff members who joined us during the year:**

**Francis** – A 17-year old youth from the foreign community in South Tel Aviv (originally from the Ivory Coast). He helped to provide a benevolent, positive, significant and present male figure for the children who had been traumatically separated from their father or who were in an intermittent and ambivalent relationship with him.

**Sylvia** – A retired Montessori-style educator. A volunteer who came once a week and met with children for individual or paired quality time, to paint and work with clay.

**Sarah and Shira** – Students of Social Work who worked individually with children and parents, carried out dyadic interventions, and conducted a community project on the subject of accessing information during the Corona period.



## Training and internal procedures

Throughout the year, the Sidra team met bi-weekly personal training meetings with the day-care center coordinator, and weekly staff meetings were held. The staff meetings consisted of sharing personal successes and challenges, and a case study on a child or incident in the center, deepening our understanding of the behavior of specific children.

During personal meetings, we talked in detail about the challenges faced by each staff member with regard to her duties, the development of personal initiatives, and the growing process of each of the members of the center's staff. During the year, we had quite a few crisis moments with children who were very challenging, where one of the children was removed from their home after being badly treated. Near the end of this school year, feedback reports were being filled for each of the staff members, during which the successes of the year, the challenges and processes that each person experienced are talked about, as well as a common understanding of the fruitful road that we took together.

**The Haruv institute** provided our staff with a course on the prevention of child abuse. We studied different cases and heightened our understanding of post-traumatic expressions among the children. In addition, before the Corona crisis, we planned to extend a short course on the "Learning to Experience Together" program, which is closely supervised by Dr. Chana Tsur, who came to observe the center. We began the important process of building together, adapting the original program to the unique situation of our center. This process was halted suddenly because of the Corona crisis and is expected to continue next year.

## The Corona Crisis

Being placed in quarantine and closing the center forced us to find other ways to stay in touch with the children. In the beginning, we worked in small emergency frameworks that Ma'ayan ran with three children each day. After the regulations changed, we began keeping in touch virtually.

We worked on three levels:

1. Attempts were made to stay in **direct contact** with the children. Each staff member was in direct touch at least once a week with her personal children. Ma'ayan also held group Zoom meetings with all the children together. In addition, there were Whatsapp video conversations with the children and the teachers, and some conference groups with some children and a teacher.
2. We sent out messages of viewing time together with the children – we prepared films with staff members as stars about maintaining hygiene, reading stories, etc.
3. Constant weekly contact with the parents - usually in the evenings, when the children were asleep and it was quiet, providing support for their emotional state, as well as economic and practical assistance. In addition, the students of social work worked hard to acquire theoretical material in Tigrinia and English about a daily schedule of activities and time with the children at home, as well as short films.

When it was possible to return to a normal framework but the parents were still afraid to come back, we carried out home visits to all the children to encourage them to return to the program. We prepared kits with activity materials for normal activities for each child, and sent Whatsapp group messages with preparatory instructions for all activities which the children had prepared.

# Thank you !

TO ALL OUR PARTNERS WHO MADE OUR WORK IN SIDRA SIGNIFICANT AND OF HIGH QUALITY.

To the Foundations and the donors who made it possible to provide a high-quality therapeutic solution for the children in the center.

To the staff of MESILA – Avigail Horowitz, Talia Ako'a, Sari Boharon and Miri Barbero-Elkayam who were significant partners in establishing Sidra, putting a lot of thought into preparing a work program and in working with the families.

To Noam Gardin, social worker, from the Aviv Municipality Department of improvements and social services, for the advice and providing therapy for the children.

To the staff of the Neve Sha'anani group of pre-schools managed by Barbara Anders, who was a true partner in recruiting children and parents and for making the correlation between the morning and afternoon working situations.

To Dr. Chana Tsur, for training the staff that followed the plan and her contribution to creating a positive atmosphere in dealing with aggressiveness.

To Salva Kovordenski for the training and supervision of the most complex coping mechanisms.



**A' 1.9.2015**

A' is a wonderful child, who expresses a lot of warmth towards the staff and the other children. Especially likes to play with dinosaur dolls and knows the names of animals in English. He was born prematurely in the fifth month of pregnancy, stayed in the hospital for six months attached to a respirator until he could breathe on his own. He has suffered from respiratory problems his whole life. When he came to Sidra, there were signs of his having been severely neglected physically (bad odor, lack of shower, clothes unsuited for his age or season, teeth in a bad state) and emotional neglect (according to the mother, it is difficult for her so his older sister takes care of him and showers him.) With Helen's help and significant mediation, an individual intervention was also carried out with the mother, as well as a dyadic intervention with the mother. As a result, the situation with regard to the neglect of A' improved significantly – medical insurance was provided on scholarship, A' was diagnosed and placed in special education, and began intensive medical treatment.

**N' 14.10.2014**

One of identical twins, a smart boy, very capable of understanding, highly verbal and with a good memory. Son to parents who are in an abusive and damaging relationship. N' has been exposed to his father's abuse of his mother, and he himself has suffered physical abuse from both of them as well as being neglected since the mother is often absent, leaving the house for periods at a time. Over the past year, following the mother's decision to leave the house, the situation worsened. The children experienced a traumatic separation from the father and the mother's descent into alcohol abuse and prostitution. N' joined the center only in February, after an extreme behavioral change in the municipal pre-school. Since joining the center, an intensive intervention was carried out with his mother. During that period, the mother succeeded in stopping to drink alcohol, to reduce the extent of her sex work (before that, men would come to their home, and today, she does that outside of the house) and the children stay with a relative. The process with N' was halted because of Corona but it is necessary to continue and lead to an intervention and follow up on the family.



## OUR CHILDREN

**N', 2.8.2016**

A captivating boy that likes to dress up in dresses and play with baby dolls. Lives with his single mother who has many health problems, the result of torture she underwent in Sinai on her way to Israel. N's father returned to Africa even before N' was born. He has two older brothers who are on the autistic spectrum, and N' himself has a significant developmental delay himself. During his stay in the center, he began to undergo developmental diagnosis and the mother participated in parenting training. Because of the family's many difficulties and the lack of proper therapy in Israel, they were allowed to resettle in the United States and were given refugee status and assistance to help them get settled.

**M', 18.10.2014**

An optimistic, smiling and funny child. His mother is dealing with schizophrenia and has symptoms such as hallucinations, hears voices and has a persecution complex. In addition, because of her many hardships and her difficulties in being able to support herself and M', and keeping a steady job, she is in a very abusive relationship. M' was physically and emotionally neglected and is exposed to the severe abuse and the rape of his mother at the hands of her partner. In view of all of this, and in view of the significant therapy to which M's mother required herself, he was removed from his home and put into emergency shelter and a foster home was found for him.



### **D', 10.5.14**

A great dancer with an amazing sense of rhythm and music. His parents are divorced, and over time, he suffered from separations (his mother cut him off from his father and after a while, his father renewed contact and separated him from his mother), was emotionally and physically neglected. During the separations from his parents, we created a communications center for the family in the center, where D' could meet with his parents, and his meetings began to be normalized and the separations he experienced were controlled so that D' could understand what was happening to him and he could find the words to describe what he felt. As a result, there was a significant improvement in D's emotional state. There is still a long way to go with the mother regarding communication, placing effective boundaries, and relating to the feelings that he expresses.

### **Y', 14.10.2014**

Diagnosed with very significant developmental delay – a five-year-old boy whose abilities are those of a two-year-old. Spoke only gibberish, was insecure and frustrated by his inability to express himself. There were things that made him violent and aggressive. A process of trust was established with the women in the staff and they learned to establish communication as well as to understand him and what he means. During individual work with his personal caregiver (Ma'ayan) his vocabulary has expanded slightly, and she also worked with him on diction, thus improving communication with him. In addition, he learned to call the staff when he had problems with the other children and learned to take advantage of mediation by the female staff, so that the levels of violence and aggressiveness decreased significantly. He was diagnosed and will start going to a kindergarten for developmental delay next year.

### **A', 22.05.15**

Knows how to occupy herself amazingly, especially likes to play with all kinds of small dolls. Diagnosed with selective mutism and very significant developmental delay in general. Bella and her personal caregiver (Reut) worked with A' closely, in a quiet room, reading stories and allowing her to choose what to play with (so that she began pointing to what she wanted).

A short time before the Corona crisis she had already begun to speak, one on one, in the quiet room. In the last week, she actually began to speak with the staff in the general space of the class, underwent the placement process and next year, will go to a special education kindergarten.

### **N', 1.1.2015**

N' dreams of being a fireman when he grows up. His parents are separated and after serious divorce disputes, he himself suffered severe abuse and was exposed to very serious abuse on the part of his father against his mother. He came to the center seriously damaged, unable to trust authority, in particular the teachers – who are women. He underwent a significant process for creating trust, first with his personal caregiver (Reut) and then with all of the women in the pre-school staff, learned to trust that they would truly help him, learned to identify what he feels and to link what he feels to how he should react. He began to learn to control himself before reacting with violence.

## **OUR CHILDREN**

### **S', 17.11.2015**

Sensitive and full of empathy for those around her – likes to water flowers, leave water for cats, and help children who need it. Her mother is a single parent. Her father is in prison for severely abusing the mother when she was pregnant with S'. Her mother has economic challenges and works in prostitution. Sidra staff helped her when it came to talking to her Israeli employers and in helping her take advantage of her rights. A dyadic intervention was carried out with regard to her children's needs.

S' needs a lot of attention, unconditional love, and physical presence. Thus, she is given significant personal time with Bella and with her personal caregiver (Ronny). In addition, a narrative intervention was carried out during which S' draws on her life, and in the end, this will become a book that will be her book.

### **H', 2.11.2014**

A smart boy with a phenomenal memory. One of many children where parents work around the clock to support the family. He and his older brother (in first grade) care for the younger children. A dyadic intervention was held for H' and his mother in order to reinforce the contact between them, to affect the mother's priorities, and to provide fun times for the two together. In addition, an authoritative intervention was carried out so that the children would not be left alone and the mother was helped by reducing the number of hours she works.



# SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS: SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

## SUCCESSSES



### **Creating a safe and regulated daily routine**

A challenged class with a rocky start, with serious cases of violence and children who were simply unable to restrain themselves, turned, with a lot of hard work, into a pleasant class, where children grow together and enjoy each other's company.



### **Reinforcing personal communication of each child and between the children**

The inability to express oneself is one of the great obstacles in the children in Sidra. During the year, we worked on expression, combining feeling and trust when communicating with adults. Today, children are more vocal and share their experiences with frustration and difficulties.



### **Successful individual processes**

Individual intervention programs were built based upon the children's needs and taking into account the family situations. Cooperation with the education and welfare systems has resulted in a real change in the children's situations and in achievements which they merited.

## CHALLENGES



### **Creating an "on the go" training program**

The Sidra program requires specialization in a great variety of domains: early education, working with trauma, at-risk families, immigration, and multi-cultural. Based on the experience we gained this year, we must create a training program that includes relating to different worlds with a variety of contents.



### **Focusing on working with children's aggressiveness**

The children who come to the center are often only able to express themselves through violence and aggressiveness. This year, there were times when the staff was helpless when facing this aggressiveness. We hope to add to the tools gained by the staff to work with the children's aggressiveness.



### **Maintain continuity and stability of the staff**

This year, two significant and very important staff members are leaving us – Ma'ayan and Ronny. Their departure might confuse the children who are staying and who were able to form significant ties with them, as well as for the rest of the staff. We must invest thought and effort in keeping staff members for several years.

IN THE NAME OF THE  
STAFF AND CHILDREN  
OF THE SIDRA CENTER,  
WE SHOULD LIKE TO THANK  
ALL OF OUR SUPPORTERS AND  
PARTNERS WHO TURNED  
SIDRA INTO A REAL FAMILY



unitaf  
we are the village