

# **The *Ad Halom* Project - Summary and Recommendations<sup>1</sup>**

## ***Research Staff RAMA<sup>2</sup>***

*This article contains an integrative summary of the main conclusions and recommendations derived from five chapters of a summative report on the Ad Halom project ("Ad Halom" is a Hebrew acronym for "Parents Learn and Children Progress").*

### ***Motives for joining the program***

Participants joined Ad Halom for two main reasons. The main one was to advance their children scholastically and to set an example for them (this motive was repeated by the women participants, who constituted the majority at the education centers). As a result, they decided to study themselves at this stage of their lives. The other major reason was a desire for personal advancement and development in order to finish their education, register for higher education and improve employment options. Additionally, participation in Ad Halom was perceived as a chance for them to improve their capability thereby raising their self-confidence and self-esteem.

### ***Attitudes toward the program during implementation***

It appears that the program succeeded in meeting many of the participants'

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1 This is a summary of the findings of an evaluation of the program during the years 2012-2014. Evaluation team leaders: Dr. David Ratner, Director of the Project Evaluation Division; Dr. Tal Raz, Director of Methodology and Statistics, RAMA-National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation

2 RAMA – an acronym of National Authority for Measurement and Evaluation in Education)

needs even during the study period, giving them great satisfaction. Most of the program teachers received considerable praise due to their ability to adapt to the needs of adult students in general and of those students whose relationship with learning was a fraught one in particular. The overall feeling is that the staff knows how to work with adults who bear emotional scars from previous studies, gradually enabling them to succeed to undergo a corrective experience.

Alongside the positive aspects of the program a few points for improvement were raised at various points in the program evaluation including insufficient or unclear information about aspects of Ad Halom, its duration, subjects to be studied, the level of the diploma awarded at the end and the relevance the diploma has for future education or employment. The in-depth interviews conducted at the end of the program, showed the confusion of some of the participants regarding the nature of the exams they had taken, not knowing whether they were matriculation exams or exams marking the completion of 12 years of schooling. With regard to subject matter, there was a clear request that English be included in those classes where English was not taught or where it was studied by only some participants. In addition, there was a need for a better solution to the situation when there is a large gap in English knowledge between participants in the same class causing some participants to drop out of the course.

In some classes, especially in the Arabic-speaking sector, studies were conducted under unsuitable conditions: no permanent classroom, lack of heating or air conditioning, children's chairs that were not suitable for adults.

### ***Changes experienced by the participants during the course of the program***

As reported by the participants, they and their families underwent

major changes during the course of their studies: their ability to help their children with their schoolwork significantly increased, the home literacy atmosphere improved, participants set a personal example for their children and enhanced their ability to be involved in their children's studies and strengthen their motivation. Changes also began to happen with regard to the participants' personal development: their ability to express themselves orally and in writing improved, an important issue both in their work and personal lives; their digital literacy increased, especially in terms of greater use of applications involving written communication, e-mail, document writing and social media; their general and current-events knowledge broadened, mainly thanks to their geography, psychology and civics studies; their social status and self-image improved. Of no less importance was the increase in their motivation to further their studies. Not less important was the increase in their motivation to continue further their studies.

### ***Post-program outcomes***

By examining the program from a nine-month perception after its completion, the Ad Halom program also appears to have successfully met the objectives that motivated participants to join including their desire to help their children with their studies and to advance and to develop personally by completing their schooling and gaining improved employment prospects. Consequently, the participants are extremely enthusiastic about recommending the program.

Program graduates attribute the considerable improvement of their well-being to Ad Halom. Significant percentage report changes that emerged during the post-program period show:

- Greater involvement with their children's studies
- Enriched knowledge, broader horizons
- Increased self-confidence, an enhanced sense of learning competence and self-image

- Improvement in the employment sphere especially among Hebrew speakers
- More positive attitudes toward the participants by their associates (especially among Hebrew speakers)
- A sense of moving ahead in life, of achievement, and in quite a few instances, a desire to continue studying.

Participants also reported change in involvement as parents in their children's studies. This change was shown in three areas:

- Emotional – a parent who engages in learning activity conveys a message to his/her children that study is not unpleasant and that one can enjoy it. Parents, as leaders, are in a better position to relate their children, setting a personal example, by conveying messages through a deep sense of personal conviction, by empathizing with and having an understanding of their children's difficulties. The improvement in this area was pronounced in both the Hebrew and Arabic language sectors.
- Subject knowledge – parents can help their children directly with their homework and take an interest in what they are studying. In this area as well, the improvement was pronounced in both language sectors.
- Communication with the school – improvement in this sphere was notable mainly among Hebrew speakers.

Some of the program graduates were disappointed that the certificate they received (certifying 12 years of schooling) does not necessarily improve their employment or study prospects and many cases it does not enable them to meet the prerequisites for jobs, desired vocational courses or academic study.

### ***Degree of interest in further study***

A large majority (85%) of the Hebrew-speaking interviewees are

interested in further study, in contrast to only a third of the Arabic-speaking interviewees.

In reality, the percentage of Arabic speakers who registered for further study (20%) was double that of the Hebrew speakers (9%). The Arabic speakers, interested in further study, seem to be much more determined about the realization of their wish than their Hebrew-speaking counterparts.

Some of those interested in pursuing additional study express deep frustration due the fact that the diploma for which they worked so hard does not meet their needs. Others express a sense of confusion and powerlessness, wondering how they can use the diploma for further study, where they can study and how they can move forward.

It is important to note that many participants expressed their gratitude towards the state for giving them the opportunity to complete their schooling at no cost. Some explicitly stated that they would never have been able to return to their studies without this opportunity.

### ***Recommendations***

Ad Halom is a program of high social value. This value is evident in its impact on many different aspects of the program graduates' lives. Program graduates appreciate its positive effects that last even after its end. Therefore, our overall recommendation is to consider keeping the program up and running and even to expand it.

Should it be decided to continue operating the program, our recommendations, based on the evaluation findings, are as follows:

1. Due to its demand, consider expanding the program to include completion of the matriculation certificate, or further study in other tracks.
2. Participants interested in further study in any existing track (matriculation, vocational courses, academic study) need help,

guidance and counseling about how to realize their aspirations. We recommend considering the provision of structured guidance towards the end of the program. For example, by giving assistance in creating a personal vision, by suggesting potential directions for personal development, and by choosing suitable study programs.

3. As early as the program registration stage, it is important that those interested be given orderly and full information about the program's structure, content and the diploma awarded at its end. It is important to focus on explaining the meaning of the diploma and the possibilities that it may or may not render for further study. This is a vital factor in preventing a reduction in motivation during the course or disappointment afterward.
4. Participants should be informed about study subjects are important and crucial for them, especially English, computers and Hebrew for Arabic speakers. We recommend considering teaching these subjects at all of the centers and improving the framework for English study in those classes where the participants' English level is not uniform (English study is regarded as important even if not all of the participants take the exam).
5. Classroom conditions, especially in the Arab sector, should be suitable, with a regular venue, heating and air conditioning and suitable furniture.
6. A significant percentage of participants drop out during the course of the program. Some leave after they have invested many hours of study. Moreover, classes sometimes are left with only a small number of pupils that does not justify their existence. A key issue with regard to attrition is the participants' great difficulty to cope with and remain in the study framework over the long term, mainly due to family and work commitments.

Below are some suggestions about how to address this issue:

- An introductory talk to coordinate expectations - it is very important to clarify that the process is not an easy one and that the participants will need to get all the help they can from their families and other support networks.
- A support and guidance framework - this should help participants cope with dilemmas and problems that arise during the program and continue, if possible, after its end by imparting skills (e.g., a time management workshop) and offering emotional support.
- Providing opportunities to make up a missed class - we recommend ways to catch up, perhaps via the Internet.
- Social groups that develop at the education centers are a valuable resource. In quite a few instances the participants noted that they had persevered thanks only to their fellow pupils. Accordingly, we recommend encouraging these groups and reinforcing the sense of commitment that the participants feel towards each other and their studies.

The complete evaluation of the program and its implementation includes the main findings pertaining to the various stages of Ad Halom during the years 2011-2014. The report chapters are as follows:

- **Factors that promote and impede registration for Ad Halom:** findings of a survey of program candidates;
- **Ad Halom in the eyes of its participants:** findings based on information gathered from program participants;
- **Causes of fatigue during the program:** findings of a survey of those who dropped out while the program was still in progress;
- **Satisfaction with the program and initial outcomes:** findings of a survey of participants approaching the end of the program;
- **Implications of the program for the participants after completion:** findings based on a survey of program graduates, half a year after the program ended.