



**THE INTERNATIONAL MA PROGRAM IN  
CHILD DEVELOPMENT FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES**



**January 2019**

**The Herta and Paul Amir Faculty of Social Sciences  
Center for the Study of Child Development**

## **The International MA Program in Child Development**

*Students from developing countries have extremely limited options world-wide to study child development within the context of their unique cultural, societal, and educational settings. While the child development field in North America and Western Europe has witnessed a significant increase in new graduate programs in the past decade, these programs have focused primarily on issues pertaining to western societies.*

### **Overview**

Training a cadre of child development professionals and policy leaders in the developing world is of the utmost urgency, as there is a pressing need to improve the lives of at-risk children around the world. In response to this urgent need, the University of Haifa has launched in October 2014 **The International MA Program in Child Development for Developing Countries**, designed to increase the professional knowledge of childcare professionals who work with children growing up in destructive environments.



The University of Haifa is uniquely positioned to host this program, an innovative academic initiative that brings talented students from diverse backgrounds – pediatrics, nursing, psychology, child psychiatry, education, anthropology, sociology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, law, media, social work and social welfare, speech pathology and therapy, and even priesthood – to make a substantial impact in their home countries in fields of education, welfare and healthcare.

The program's mission is consistent with the statement of Mr. Anthony Lake, UNICEF's Executive Director: "We must do more to reach all children in need, wherever they live, wherever they are excluded and left behind...If we overcome the barriers that have kept these children from the services they need and that are theirs by right, then millions more will grow up healthy, attend school, and live more productive lives."

The program opened in October 2014 with its pioneer cohort of 27 highly-qualified and motivated students, the second, third and fourth years opened in October 2015, October 2016, and October 2017 with 21, 18 and 20 students, respectively, of similar quality. These four cohorts included students from Albania, Belarus, Botswana, Cameroon, Congo, Chile, China, Ethiopia, Ghana, Georgia, Hungary, India, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Myanmar, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Slovenia (ROMA community), South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. All students were awarded the MA degree in Child Development.

We also have students from developed countries (e.g. Israel, Canada, The Netherlands, and USA) who are interested in specializing in child development in developing countries as well. All the students graduated successfully in the summers of 2015, 2016 and 2017 respectively, got their MA degrees, and returned to their home countries in order to continue their work in fostering the wellbeing of children.

This year's class (2018-2019) includes 19 students from Australia, Albania, Botswana, Ethiopia, Georgia, Ghana, Israel, Liberia, Kenya, Myanmar, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, and the USA. MA degree will be awarded to them in July 2019.

### **Supporting a Global Agenda**

In September 2000, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a series of goals to reduce extreme poverty, promote peace and strengthen environmental protection. Known as the UN Millennium Development Goals, many of the objectives touched upon improving the lives of children. In fact, the accompanying declaration by world leaders singled out children for special attention: "As leaders we have a duty to all the world's people, especially the most vulnerable and, in particular, the children of the world, to whom the future belongs."

The World Bank points out that there are significant economic costs associated with underfunding child and youth services in developing countries. "Failing to invest in children and youth triggers substantial economic, social, and political costs. Given the cumulative nature of human development, under investments in children and youth are difficult to reverse later in life, and the price for society is high. Negative outcomes resulting from misaligned investment strategies include truncated human and social capital accumulation (e.g. school drop-out, poor labor market entry) and negative conduct (e.g. substance abuse, crime and violence, risky sexual behaviors)."

Moreover, evidence shows that such behaviors are likely to be transferred to the next generation, creating a vicious cycle of social exclusion and negative behaviors. Although it is impossible to put a value on a human life, the World Bank estimates that public investment of \$1 in early childhood generates \$7 of savings in national expenditure required to reverse the damages. Typical negative outcomes include school drop-out, poor labor market entry, substance abuse, risky sexual behaviors, and crime and violence.



### **The Program**

Taught in English, the one-year MA Program in Child Development is offered through the University of Haifa's Center for the Study of Child Development and Faculty of Social Sciences in conjunction with the University's International School. The applied developmental program bridges the science-practice gap at the international level. With this focus, the Child Development Program is set to advance the following objectives:

- Provide scientific and professional skills in transforming knowledge from basic human development research to various applied issues (e.g., child care, nutrition, infant and young children morbidity and mortality, academic motivation in schools, orphanages and children raised in institutions, foster care, adoption, and effective parenting).
- Train professional leadership that will enhance the well-being of children and their families in countries-in-need, with a focus on prevention and intervention, in order to

promote family functioning as well as social and community network and support (see Appendix for list of admission requirements). Examples include the after effects of disastrous conditions such as HIV, war zones and political violence, genocide, and child soldiers.

- Serve as a catalyst for improving the status of child development programs in developing countries in order to raise awareness and encourage new generations of child development experts.

### **Final Projects**

One of the highlights of the program are the final projects, which are presented in a final poster session that takes place toward graduation.

Successful completion of the studies leads to a:

- Master of Arts in Child Development from the Faculty of Social Sciences

Administrative support for the program is provided by the University of Haifa's International School, which has been running a successful Study Abroad Program for 35 years. The School has a worldwide reputation for its academic accomplishments, emphasis on cultural immersion with the local population, and caring environment by providing a rich selection of social and cultural extracurricular activities.

### **Admission Process**

Over 1,200 applications were received for the first, second, third, fourth and fifth year of the program. Rigorous criteria were applied to narrow the list down to the strongest candidates. These candidates were interviewed in face-to-face meetings (e.g. in Ghana) or via Skype to determine their suitability for the program and their potential to serve as change agents in their home countries. Invitations were extended to 27 students in the first year, 21 in the second year, 18 in the third year, and 20 in the fourth year, 19 in the current year (2018/19), and all officially enrolled in the program. This academic initiative has brought thus far talented students from diverse backgrounds – pediatrics, nursing, public health, priesthood, psychology, child psychiatry, education, anthropology, sociology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, law, library studies,

media, social work and social welfare, speech pathology and therapy – and they will make a substantial impact in their home countries in fields of education, welfare and healthcare.

**Academic Leadership** (partial list)



**Prof. Abraham (Avi) Sagi-Schwartz** is Professor of Psychology and Child Development, Academic Head of the International MA Program in Child Development, Founder and Director (emeritus) of the Center for the Study of Child Development, and former Dean of Graduate Studies and former Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Haifa.

Prof. Sagi-Schwartz also has held visiting positions at Columbia University, the University of Utah, Regensburg University (Alexander Von Humboldt Research Scholar, Germany), the University of Maryland at College Park, The New School for Social Research (NYC), and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Prof. Sagi-Schwartz also held the rotating Mary Main Chair on Attachment across the Life Span at Leiden University, and in the years 2005/2006 and 2012/2013 he was a Jennings Randolph Senior Fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, Washington, DC, and Phyllis Greenberg Heideman and Richard D. Heideman Fellow, The Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC, respectively. Prof. Sagi-Schwartz is the recipient of the 2007 Society for Research in Child Development Award for Distinguished International Contributions to Child Development, and the 2015 Bowlby-Ainsworth Award for Attachment Research. His main research interests are in the area of attachment and socioemotional development across the life span and across cultures. He has special interest in transforming basic knowledge generated by child development research to various policies and interventions that may advance the well-being of children across the world.



**Prof. David Oppenheim** is Professor in the Department of Psychology and the International Program in Child Development, and a member of the Center for the Study of Child Development at the University of Haifa. Prof. Oppenheim is former chair of the Department of Psychology at the University of Haifa, was the Associate editor of the *Infant Mental Health Journal* and served on the board of the World Association of Infant Mental Health on which he was member and treasurer.

Prof. Oppenheim's research focuses on the central importance of caregiving relationships for children's social and emotional development. In particular, his research has examined the role of parental *Insightfulness* and *parent-child open communication* in the organization of attachment relationships throughout childhood. Prof. Oppenheim's studies on these questions involved longitudinal studies, and included typically developing children, children at high risk such as those in foster care and those whose parents experienced trauma, and children with atypical development such as Autism and Mental Retardation.



**Dr. Efrat Sher-Censor** is a senior lecturer and the head of the Interdisciplinary Child Development MA Program, Academic Coordinator of the International MA Program in Child Development, and a research associate at the Center for the Study of Child Development, University of Haifa, Israel. She is a member of the editorial board of *Infancy*.

Dr. Sher-Censor's main research interests are parent-child relationships and their effects on the socio-emotional adaptation of infants, children, and adolescents across various ecological niches, such as ethnocultural minorities, immigrant families, and families residing in high-risk neighborhoods.

Dr. Sher-Censor holds a Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of Haifa. She completed her Post-Doctoral studies with Distinguished Prof. Ross D. Parke and Prof. Scott Coltrane at the Center of Family Studies, University of California – Riverside.

## Partnerships

The Center for the Study of Child Development maintains excellent collaborative relationships with academics and professionals in major international institutions, including (selected): Columbia University, University of Utah, University of Jena (Germany), University of Maryland at College Park, University of Lausanne (Switzerland), Leiden University (the Netherlands), New School for Social Research (NYC), New York University, The World Bank, UNICEF, University of California –Berkeley, University of California – Davis, University of California – San Francisco, University of California – Riverside, University of Vienna. These ongoing professional contacts serve to strengthen the program. See for example,

Greetings conveyed to students from Dr. Pia Britto, (Senior Advisor/Chief Early Childhood Section – UNICEF):

*“The time has come for early childhood development (ECD). The need of the hour is to build global capacity in ECD. A yearlong MA program in Child Development will equip you with the knowledge and skills to lead in the field of ECD, promoting the health and well-being of our children’s future. I wish you the very best”*



## **Some achievements, and impact post-graduation (a sample)**

**Abang Fidelis Abah** (Cameron), a **Priest** and Psycho-clinician by training began provides consultancy services at a local Center for Children in Distress. The Center provides shelter for orphaned and abandoned children, many from birth-5 years old.

**Seng Raw** (Myanmar) – has become Director of PPLF (Pann Pyoe Lett Foundation). Goal of the organization: To reach marginalized and children living in difficult circumstances to provide effective early years support. Was granted budget from The Australian Embassy in Myanmar to support a p Project: “Integrated Early Childhood Intervention on Responsive Care and Resilience Building”: Behavior change in Parents for social-emotional development of young children in Kachin IDP camps”. This project is designed to provide emotional support and build capacity to (350) mothers of new born and toddlers and to provide safe and stimulated environment to (1600) children of aged (0-8) years from (16) IDP camps in (6) townships in Kachin State and Northern Shan State. Delegate at the 2017 World Forum on Early Care and Education, May 9-12, 2017, Auckland, New Zealand.



**Peter Akyea** (Ghana) – works as a district director in the Department of Children under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Child Protection. His final project was on Care for Children of Street Girls and the Availability of Early Childhood Centers in slums in Ghana. Since his return to Ghana he has been actively involved in various child welfare activities, for example, and in collaboration with the Catholic Church, he trained over two hundred Catholic priests throughout the country on Child rights and Child protection.

**Manju Wagle** (Nepal) Program, Planning and Education Officer in UNICEF Nepal, and ECD/Education program in local, provincial and federal government in Nepal. Providing training to ECD teachers to develop local level teaching-learning materials, involved in training multi-sectoral stakeholders – Health, nutrition, water supply, child protection and education, advocacy with the local, provincial and federal government to develop a multi-sectoral ECD strategy. Formed Multisectoral ECD task force team in UNICEF to improve ECD overall situation in Nepal.



With Dr. Pia Britto, Chief, Unit of Early Childhood Development, UNICEF, Headquarter NYC.

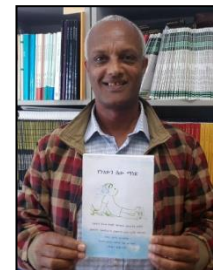


**Aarju Niroula** (Nepal) – A **pediatric nurse** who was working as a nurse-in-charge before joining the program. Since her return to Nepal, she has become a lecturer in a Nursing College. Being engaged in sensitization of stakeholders, nursing staff teachers and parents about socioemotional development which is new concept in Nepal. Also, engaged in training teachers of preschools. Realizing the public health impact of child health issues in Nepal she recently began Master studies in public health in order to combine knowledge of child development and public health.

**Rusudan Bochorishvili** (Georgia) – She wrote a project proposal and got funding from OSF. The project’s aims is to implement DIR/Floor time model in Early Intervention services in Georgia. Anat Oppenheim, one of the faculty members in our program has visited already twice in Georgia to train and supervise Georgian teams. A number of participants already obtain online training by Anat Oppenheim to become local experts and trainers. This project is likely to provide opportunities for children with special needs in Georgia, especially with ASD, and in order to obtain alternate intervention (DIR) than that provided by ABA. Meanwhile, Rusudan was also appointed as a Chair of Georgian Coalition of Early Childhood Intervention Coalition. Moreover, she is leading more programs in her organization (First Step Georgia).

**Lika Mkhatvari** (Georgia). Executive Director of "Bridge for Social Inclusion", has facilitated exchange with Akaki Tsereteli State University, and there has been in July 23-26<sup>th</sup> a visit at University of Haifa with a delegation from Georgia of the Rector and Dean of Education to collaborate with the University of Haifa to establish a similar MA program in Child Development in Georgia.

**Sahilu Baye Alemu** (Ethiopia) wears many hats in Ethiopia – psychologist, project manager and politician. In his current role as the Director of the Enrichment Center of Disadvantaged Children, Sahilu is focused on helping children with both physical and psychological health issues. Some observed impacts of his activities: Over 300 children received alternative child care support and school attendance improved, 12 Orphan children protected from street life and related problems, 40 caregivers of preschools and orphanages trained on “Attachment, Socio-emotional and Psychosocial development of children”, Improved the sensitive, responsive and consistent care skills of 40 child caregivers, positive changes in life conditions of over 300 orphan & vulnerable children, Enhanced community participation which Involves key stakeholders such as preschool teachers, preschool management staffs, child caregivers, community leaders, and local officials to ensure the sustainability of the project. One of the highlights of Sahilu was his recent TED lecture in the Conference Impact for Good in Addis Ababa during an official visit of the President of the State of Israel.



**Patience Dali** (Kenya) – Overseeing as a **pediatric nurse** the maternal and child health unit, Ministry of Health, and says that “first and foremost”, she is now being regarded as the expert in child and family related issues, consulting with her on various socioemotional issues.

**Oliver Christine Nakyazze** (Uganda) – Upon her return home she left her position in UNICEF in order to join the GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR EDUCATION - WORLD BANK to work on projects for improving the education structures in ECD centers in Uganda.

**Emma Murumbe Fynn** (Ghana) – She was a Teaching Assistant before enrolling in the program in Haifa, and now she got a position as a School Partnerships Coordinator, in an international organization working closely with the Government of Ghana in project called Transforming Teacher Education and Learning Pre-service education in the Colleges of Education in Ghana.

**Alphonso Wright** (Liberia). Since his return to Liberia, he has been serving as Department Chair for Early Childhood Education and Instructor at private university African Methodist Episcopal University). Engaged with the professional development (teacher training) of early childhood teachers and assist in the development of the department’s curriculum.

**Grace Wachera Mwangi** (Kenya) – her professional and interpersonal influence has grown in her professional networks and in her organization: GIVE a CHILD a FAMILY (GCF). Her superiors are discussing possible changes in her in position in light of her academic achievements. Furthermore, Grace reports that her studies in Haifa have borne fruits in bringing transformation in the lives of children and their families. Her scope of influence has increased to include Children Office in Kiambu County; Consultancy work with SOS Children organization; Opportunities to speak in Radio stations as well as in her regular work. She is engaged in a family preservation program, collaborating with a District Children’s Office in a quest to prevent out home placement/unnecessary institutionalization of children.

**Emmanuel Nyarko-Tetteh** (Ghana) – Very active in organising seminars and workshops for small groups and parents in the church as well as spreading child development knowledge to the public via the media. He is a regular panellist on radio and TV stations and being called upon when there is any issue that bothers on child abuse. Working also with UNICEF Ghana.



Advocacy for child rights and against abuse

**Shikha Kashyap** (India), has pursued further studies in the international community development (Glocal) at the Hebrew University, and starting now internship with a UK based organization in Nepal - Restless Development. Her main task there will be to design a program to impact gender-based violence among school children of the villages in the far north of the country.

**Dr. Joseph Mayowa** (Nigeria), a pediatrician, pursuing his project from University of Haifa attempting to improve the diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder in his Neurology Clinic. Planning on community outreach to carry out a screening program for children with developmental delays. Since returning to Nigeria, has written a proposal on the need to establish Well Child Clinic and Child Developmental Centre for children with Developmental Delays.

**Dr. Nana Gaisie** (Ghana), a pediatrician, introduced a developmental follow up for children with special needs clinic (Effia Nkwanta Regional Hospital), developed a flagship program for hospitals, creating awareness on autism, a multi-disciplinary program with the participation of pediatricians, dieticians, psychologists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, special educators, nongovernmental organizations, volunteers, parents, and religious representatives. She is raising funds and sponsorship to improve neonatal care as a Master Trainer for Essential Newborn care in Ghana, raised sponsorship to get oxygen supply centralized in the neonatal intensive care unit - a situation that has improved survival markedly, identified an old office in her hospital which they have received permission to convert to a child protection unit. Currently soliciting for funds to make this happen. This will make her hospital the second ever to have such a Unit in Ghana. Due for promotion this year to a higher rank which would have taken 2 more years without the MA in Child Development. Nana is a 2018-2020 Zero-to-Three fellow.

Here are some pictures from on autism awareness program.



Radio talk show on Autism Awareness

**Yukhiko D. Amnon** (Liberia) is the National Head of Early Childhood Education, Ministry of Education, Liberia, and National Representative Liberia, World Forum Foundation, Member Africa Network for Early Child.



Introducing the Early Childhood National Professional Development Framework.

### **Ph.D. Studies**

- **Melissa Washington-Nortey** (Ghana) – PHD in developmental psychology, Virginia Commonwealth University
- **Dickson Ong’ayi** (Kenya) –PHD at the Department of Child and Family Studies, Syracuse University
- **Amor Loniza** (Philippines) – PHD studies in Early Childhood Education, University of Pendidikan, Malaysia
- **Sophia Backhaus** (Erasmus student - Germany) – DPhil Studies in Social Intervention, Centre for Evidence-Based Intervention, Department of Social Policy and Intervention, University of Oxford, UK.

### **About the University of Haifa**

The University of Haifa is the largest comprehensive research university in Israel's northern region and academic home to a community of students that most accurately mirrors Israeli society. It enrolls the largest number of military and security personnel, who study alongside civilians from all walks of life - Haredi and secular Jews, new immigrants, Arabs, and Druze.

The University's mission is to cultivate academic excellence, create a shared Israeli experience, and promote democratic values in an environment of tolerance and multiculturalism. It is such an environment that contributes to outstanding research and a community of exceptional, creative, and productive alumni. We believe that fostering outstanding research while strengthening Israel's northern region and promoting an environment of multiculturalism is of strategic importance for the continued existence and prosperity of the State of Israel.

The University of Haifa stands atop Mount Carmel, where Haifa's southern boundary verges on the Carmel National Park. Over 18,000 students study here for undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral degrees. The University of Haifa is fully committed to academic excellence, which is expressed in its many and diverse interdisciplinary and international programs and collaborations with academic institutions around the world. The University of Haifa has gained an international reputation in many research areas, and is Israel's leading university in the humanities, education, social sciences and marine research.

#### **Contact Information**

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