

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



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## 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.*

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 **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 the new program, an innovative academic initiative that brings talented students from diverse backgrounds – pediatrics, nursing, psychology, education, anthropology, sociology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, law, social work and social welfare, speech pathology and therapy – to make a substantial impact in their home countries in fields of education, welfare and healthcare.

The program's mission is consistent with the recent 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.”

Twenty-seven highly-qualified and motivated students who comprised the first cohort of the program that opened in October 2014 graduated in July 2015 and already returned to their home countries with their MA in Child Development. This outstanding cohort included graduates from Chile, Ghana, Nepal, Ethiopia, Cameroon, China, Liberia, Kenya, Myanmar, South Africa, and

Nigeria. We also have graduates from developed countries (e.g. Israel, The Netherlands, and USA) interested empowering child development in developing countries as well.

This year (2015/2016), which is the second year of the program, we have a similar excellent group from the following countries: Ghana, Cameroon, China, Georgia, Liberia, Israel, Kenya, Myanmar, Philippines, Tanzania, Uganda, USA, and Zimbabwe.

## 2014 Program Graduates (to name a few)



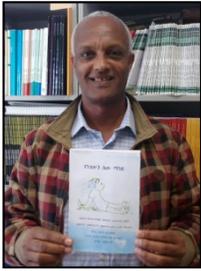
A Priest and Psycho-clinician by training, **Abang Fidelis Abah**, began volunteering at a local Center for Children in Distress in Cameroon in response to a plea for help from the Center's Director. The Center provides shelter for orphaned and abandoned children, many from birth-5 years old. Abang quickly realized that these at-risk children needed access to professionals with training in child development. With no local governmental funding available, Abang received scholarship support from the University to attend the program. "It was a miracle that I made it. My country does not have this kind of information, and we need it," explains Abang.



**Manju Wagle**, a Program and Planning Officer in UNICEF–Nepal, was so impressed when she saw the curriculum outline that she immediately applied. "I am very interested with everything connected with making the learning experience more child friendly. The course will give me a deeper understanding of teacher training, classroom set-up, age appropriate learning centers and building outdoor play areas. I plan to take this information back to Nepal and apply what I have learned to early childhood centers in my region." Manju is grateful for the scholarship support she received from the University. "Without this assistance, I could not have come."



**Nada Ajami-Tondo**, from Liberia, worked her way through college as an early childhood teacher. Upon graduating, she was selected as a fellow in the President's Young Professional Program and assigned to the Ministry of Education. At the Ministry, she works as an Early Childhood Education Specialist responsible for policies, guidelines and teacher training programs. Nada is glad that she was selected as a program participant. "I am happy to have this opportunity to learn. In Liberia, there are no academic programs designed specifically for early childhood educators. My goal is to apply what I have learned here to establish teacher training courses and programs in Liberia."



**Sahilu Baye Alemu** 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. He is especially interested in the field of early childhood education and has written a book on the topic in Amharic. Sahilu is very enthusiastic about the opportunity to learn in Israel and sees many benefits to the program. "I see this program from different perspectives. Academically,

the university is to be commended for offering a program that will improve the lives of children and make the world more peaceful, prosperous and stable. Politically, the program is a source of international goodwill. I have already told my colleagues and political associates back home about the warm welcome we received. Socially, our two countries have much in common. It is very important to keep strengthening these ties."

## **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. [See Appendix A for a list of courses.]

The applied developmental program bridges the science-practice gap at the international level. With this international 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, political violence and child soldiers, 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.

Successful completion of the 40 required credit hours will lead 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 400 applications were received for the first and second years of the program. Rigorous criteria were applied to narrow the list down to the strongest candidates. [See Appendix B for Admission Requirements] 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 and 24 in the second year, and all officially enrolled in the program. Thirty four participants requested and received scholarship support.

## 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, Director of the Center for the Study of Child Development, and former Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Haifa.

Prof. Sagi-Schwartz also has held visiting positions at the University of Utah, Regensburg University (Alexander Von Humboldt Research Scholar, Germany), the University of Maryland at College Park, 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.

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.



**Dr. 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 faculty member in 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):

University of Utah, University of Jena (Germany), University of Maryland at College Park, University of Lausanne (Switzerland), Leiden University (the Netherlands), The World Bank, UNICEF, University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Davis, University of California, San Francisco, University of California, Riverside, The New School for Social Research (NYC), Columbia University, and University of Vienna (Austria).

These ongoing professional contacts serve to strengthen the program.

## **Tuition and Financial Aid**

Please see program website for current tuition and fees. There are numerous sources of financial aid available to students who choose to study at the University of Haifa. For a list of scholarship options please see the program website. Applicants from developing countries are eligible for scholarships to cover tuition, medical insurance and living expenses.

## APPENDIX A – Curriculum

Early socioemotional development	2 credit hours
Child development in a cross-cultural perspective	2 credit hours
Selected issues in child development research	4 credit hours
Statistics for developmental sciences	2 credit hours
Cognitive and language development and emerging literacy	2 credit hours
Parenting and attachment	2 credit hours
Children with special needs	2 credit hours
Early intervention programs	2 credit hours
Psychological assessments of young children	2 credit hours
Early detection and screening of developmental problems	2 credit hours
Observation, Evaluation and Intervention Methods: Children, Parents, Child Care Settings preschools and schools workshop	4 credit hours
Invited international lecturers on policy issues in developing countries	2 credit hours
Emotional and Professional development	4 credit hours
Program Seminar	4 credit hours
Final project seminar	4 credit hours

## APPENDIX B – Admission Requirements

- Accredited BA/BED/BSC, in relevant academic disciplines related to social services for children: pediatrics, social work, occupational therapy, speech and language pathology, physical therapy, nursing, early childhood education, psychology and law.
- Un-Official Transcript and Undergraduate Diploma - Submit an un-official transcript and a copy of your undergraduate diploma (i.e., Bachelor's diploma) from the institution of higher education attended. The official transcript and undergraduate diploma will be required only if you are accepted to the program.
- A minimum of 3.0 GPA, 80% or equivalent.
- At least three years of experience working with children and families. Preference will be given to individuals who already demonstrate experience in leadership positions in their respective fields.
- Statement of Purpose - Type and submit a statement of purpose (500 words). State your specific interests with respect to the International Child Development MA program, your career objectives, intended area of specialization, and research interests and experience that are of particular interest.
- Personal History Statement - Type and submit a personal history statement (500 words). Please discuss how your personal background informs your decision to pursue a graduate degree in Child Development. You may include any professional, educational or personal experiences, challenges, or opportunities relevant to your decision.
- English test scores might be required if native language is not English or candidates have not previously studied at an institution of higher education where the language of instruction is English. In such event we will consider each candidate on individual basis, also based on further evidence attesting to mastery of the English language.
- Letters of Recommendation – Recommendations should be from relevant faculty members or professional supervisors and written using the letter of recommendation forms provided in the web site of the program. The recommenders should send their letters by email to: [intchilddev@psy.haifa.ac.il](mailto:intchilddev@psy.haifa.ac.il)

## **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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