Notes from JFN Briefing – Children and Youth at Risk in Israel

Adv. Vered Windman, executive director of National Council for the Child Co-chair Inter-sectoral subcommittee, PMO

COVID-10 has uncovered systemic and integral challenges that arise from the situation in a more acutely manner.

On the national infrastructure sphere:

1. Ineffective communication.
2. Difficulties in coordinating national efforts.
3. No proper solution for out-of-home care facilities or juvenile correctional facilities.
4. A visible increase in reports of youth on the streets, shut down of shelters and lack of information among law enforcement.
5. Education system shut down and social distancing prevent identifying at-risk situations.

What’s been accomplished thus far:

1. Welfare workers and services are gradually reinstated, nationwide.
2. Numerous voluntary efforts to provide necessities.
3. NCC's assistance center bulked its volunteers and digital presence to provide better online assistance.

What needs to be done now?

1. Putting together a centralized communication mechanism.
2. Ensuring continued and universal access to food, equipment, internet access and family support programs.
3. Closing human capital gaps in the field of at-risk children.

What needs to be done in the future?

1. Convening a national inter-sectorial forum dedicated to at-risk children and youth.
2. Compiling a comprehensive statement paper by CSOs, based on their experience.
3. Establishing a financial resilience mechanism for CSOs working in the realm of children.
4. Knowledge development and professionalism in identifying at-risk children remotely via digital means, i.e. professional ethical guidelines.
5. Development of remote therapeutic solutions: access to infrastructure and professional trainings.
6. Establishing a 'One stop shop' to provide basic needs and referral to appropriate address for children and families by synergizing government, local authority, and community resources.
Ms. Iris Florentin - Senior Vice President, Head of Social Services at the Ministry of Social Affairs, GOI

Government Mode of Operation with At-Risk Populations:

- Government is in charge of policy and preparing services for local municipalities who implement the services through the country.
  
The budget about NIS 2B for 350,000 children at risk a year. Offerings:
  - Services from age of birth -18
  - Services at risk birth-3
  - Services for after school
  - Treatments for children that are sexually abused and are experiencing violence.

- Models that look at their children and their family at the same time
  
  Unless the family cannot care for the child, then they are removed to foster care or youth villages.

- Social workers helps the family with the treatment so the children can stay home vs going to out of home care.

The challenges that arise as a result of Covid-19

- Foster families are having a difficult time to send back home to areas of quarantine were out of the home for 5 weeks.
  
  Youth villages - Social workers and staff were not able to send the kids home.
  
  Some of the children went back home with food and tablets for Pesach. Once they came home some of them were sent back to the youth villages because the parents could not take care of them

- Out patient for children at risk - Emergency centers at full capacity and others opened to accommodate the need. The ministry asked the managers of the emergency centers to stay open and to provide care for children who needs to be in quarantine for 2 weeks.

- Some of the children are taken out by law they need to bring them out so that the children's rights are protected. Physical and emotional rights
  
  Coordination of Ministries - When social services are working its always in coordination with ministry of health and education. When the local setting is closed we can not do that.

- Communication is very difficult during this time is very hard. Finding the children before the risk - monitoring and before the crisis is acute. Then addressing the issues when the situation becomes dangerous.

Government-Philanthropy Collaboration:

- Digital solution - health centers (kupot holim) can send texts to the parents that they can seek treatment.
  
  Call center 105
  
  4 girls - professional to answer and give the right info
  
  Artificial Intelligence Solution to help find children who are at risk.

- Therapist that work with children at risk - social workers and leaders need help to continue to provide the services.
Philanthropic Response

Leora Propper - JFN member, Social Investor and Chair of Propper Family Foundation, shared her views about the place of philanthropy in helping to address the challenges facing Children and Youth at-risk in Israel.

- Funders Can Leverage the Crisis - philanthropists are accelerators of new ideas. As funders it is important that we insist on quick surveys as there is a huge information gap. Example Tovanot BaHinuch - teacher students and parents survey. Share insights with ecosystem and the government.
  Quick change in priorities: Grants should be given bigger, faster and more flexible. Transition from food and medicine to emotional needs for students and teachers.
  Example: Need for toys - provided vouchers for Toys R Us that the managers of the villages can buy.
- Collaborating with other funders - willingness to collaborate. Barriers to collaborations within the orgs has fallen and encourage the orgs we support collaborate. Clear one voice can create bigger impact on government actions. We need a clear voice of the funders.
- One needs one map coordinated amongst NGOs on in the field to be shared with the government. There is a blind spot within the ministries to know what is happening on the ground.
- Intervention - computers, digital skills and villages.
- Recommendations - Join Vered at the roundtable which will evolve into a permanent forum.
  Continue conversations with funders. Enable smaller circles to coordinate together.

Renana Levine Pashkus – The Schusterman Foundation:

First two weeks Schusterman gave emergency grants to populations we fund and populations that we don’t usually fund but need emergency needs, food, medicine.

How can this disruption create an intervention that we can take forward as funders?

Different pilots for treatment plans

Technology for children suffering from violence and neglect

This is the time to do the research how does it affect this field.

With many organizations taking a hit, there needs to be more interactions and collaboration between the ecosystem and as funders we can push this forward to better the field.

Things to consider when evaluating:

Are the full amounts of funds ready now so we are up and running in a few months?

Once we create a proof of concept, do we have a partner in the government?

Understanding that less evaluation etc may be at a price – but know what that price is going to be.

Initial thoughts –

Technological prevention tool to ID kids in distress and be able to see them and what they need. In partner with Haruv, Dan Ariely. Use the online learning to ID how they are doing. Some treatments that can be done from afar and then use later on.

Pediatricians - do more ID and prevention. Who are the children meeting that we can use to leverage. Goshen to work with children abuse and neglect.
Universal Prevention - First time moms in JLM for example. Strengthening the communities are neighbors can see what is happening in people’s home. Do they know who to contact?

Social media models – Use social media to reach out to at risk populations.

Increase needs for advocacy – organizations that can the advocates for kids. That the roundtable is talking about what needs to be discussed.

Q&A

Loera to Iris - How do we ensure government takes care of infrastructure so that philanthropy can come in with new interventions? If we don’t have e-learning funders can develop solutions.

How do we create a dialogue?

Iris - Govt involved with big picture which is changing and now it is on the table. I am finding the right budget to fund computers. We can work together to find solution. We know how to work with NGOs not so much with foundation. We need to sit around the table and have a tender offer about it. Talk and put a program together.

Marty Karp - Current crisis has shifted to online learning. What is the role of civil society in a system wide approach?

Vered - Social gaps are widening places with no internet or parental assistance. What civil society can do is assisting parents and empowering them ensuring every child has access to internet and knowledge. All system moved to digital platforms.

Miki Lion - Emergency Corona fund - struggling with finding places where smaller grants make a difference. Also due diligence and not just sending money with follow up and relationship. Also doing direct funding - I fear we end up giving to the areas that are easiest to give. How do we give small grants and manage this?

Leora - work with orgs that you are already supporting and take the lens of at risk so you can delve deeper. You don’t need to go through a strategic exercise just ID the audiences that need most support.

Alex Greenbaum - Israeli government failed families. There is a real need to look inwardly. Is that happening?

Vered - it is more clear today to see where the gaps are and see a better picture for the government. This is what NGOs can bring to the able that infrastructures were weak and now we can see how we can bring the support to these families in a much deeper level

Benny Levin - short term difficult to know what is happening since its survival mode right now. In the long term - create a roundtable of funders and government to be able to address long term issues like remote learning which is a very complex issues for children at risk that goes beyond the computer and wifi.