



## Better Together

### Poverty and Children At-Risk in Israel

Nearly one-third of Israeli children live beneath the poverty line and approximately one in every six children are defined as at-risk. Communities and neighborhoods that are plagued by entrenched poverty, such as development towns on Israel's periphery and poor inner city neighborhoods, have particularly high numbers of at-risk children. Recent studies by the JDC-Myers-Brookdale Institute have found that the effectiveness of many poverty relief intervention schemes is impeded by a lack of coordination and long-term planning by organizations working in the same communities and neighborhoods. Furthermore, many intervention plans focus only on the weaknesses of their target populations and not on strengthening the capacity of communities to cope with the challenges they face.

### Better Places to Raise Children

JDC-Ashalim's *Better Together* initiative inspires long-term change in blighted neighborhoods by forging partnerships between residents and service providers that define and address the needs of local children and youth. As a community development effort, *Better Together* brings local residents, schools, police, municipalities, community centers and social service providers together to improve existing services and to create new programs where needed.

The program's holistic approach follows children – from birth to 18, from morning till night, from school to home. It focuses on three primary areas:

- **An Early Start** – awareness of proper child development, identification and treatment of babies and preschoolers with lags in development and special needs.
- **Academics** – school readiness and support for kindergartners through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.
- **Extracurricular** – safe, positive enrichment for children and youth of all ages.

*Better Together* creates a more efficient and effective way of servicing at-risk children and youth by coordinating, redirecting, and pooling together existing resources. It motivates professionals to partner to serve unmet needs, parents to become involved, and grassroots community efforts to take shape. Once the feeling of change is in the air, more resources are invested in the neighborhood – new volunteers, new funders and new program partners.

*Better Together* is piloting in nine neighborhoods, impacting the lives of some 15,000 children.

### Program Partners

*Better Together* operates in partnership with JDC-Ashalim, Israeli government agencies, municipalities, local academic institutions, non-profit organizations and corporations.