

## December 2008 Newsletter

Over the past few weeks, several members of the Talia Trust committee have been busy visiting and reviewing all current projects while finalizing the coming year's plans with school principals and project managers.

We were especially pleased to have feed-back from our first project and to hear what has happened to the youngsters involved. This is the Hadera project and involves psycho-didactic testing by an educational psychologist. It operates in Branco Weiss school which caters for middle and high school drop-outs-or near drop-outs. A majority of the children in this school have specific learning difficulties and come from low socio-economic backgrounds.

We would like to share five of the "Talia Trust" graduates' stories with you.

S., his parents and 7 siblings live with his disabled grandmother because his parents have lost everything, including their home. His school counselor reported that he is an able, well-behaved boy but had great difficulty expressing himself in writing. She said that he was urgently in need of being tested but his parents could not afford the cost. As a result of the tests financed by the Talia Trust, S. was allowed to take modified Bagrut matriculation exams. Two years later, he has passed most of the subjects, such as mathematics, English and Hebrew, and will take the remaining few subjects after he has finished the army.

R., who was born in the Caucasus region, has been living in Israel for 10 years. His parents have low paid jobs, mother as a care-giver, father in a factory. The school thought R. suffered from attention deficiency and that it would be difficult for him to take his Bagrut matriculation exams in the circumstances. It felt he needed to be examined under special conditions but his parents were unable to finance the requisite testing. In the event, he has now graduated high school with a Bagrut certificate and is proudly doing his army service in the military police.

The teachers had noticed B.'s ability when she was in 11<sup>th</sup> grade and had moved her into the Bagrut stream belatedly. When the Talia Trust began to operate in the school, B. was in her last year and it was critical that she be tested immediately. As a result, the Department of Education allowed Batya

extra time in exams, for the questions to be read to her and for her to dictate her answers. She achieved a full Bagrut and today is completing her second, final year of National Service. She had studied in the administration stream for the Bagrut and so was accepted to work in the out-patients' department of a large hospital.

U. is one of five siblings. His parents were in serious financial difficulties when the Talia Trust was asked by the school to pay for him to be tested. He was described by the counselor as bright, studying in the biological sciences class, but with serious problems expressing himself. As a result of the tests, the Department of Education agreed for him to take the matriculation exams orally. He finished school in the summer of 2008 with nearly a full bagrut (he just has to improve his English grade) and is now studying under a Hesder yeshiva-army programme in Jerusalem.

C. is a bright girl but her teachers saw that her achievements were not up to par and asked the Talia Trust to help. The psycho-didactic tests showed that she should take all exams orally. In addition they showed that she is dyscalculic and so she took biology instead of mathematics within her Bagrut requirements. After graduating with a full Bagrut, she is doing national service in a public health clinic.

These are just a few of the many cases the Trust has been able to help in Hadera over the past three years, thanks to all its supporters. Following these successes, we have decided to expand the programme and have now financed testing for a further fourteen children.