**Balla – Avni, Yael** **(PS4-C)**

**From a Neglected Issue to National Policy**

**Two Chapter Joint Initiative Story**

This is the story of a unique collaboration that changed the map of services for at-risk children in Israel. In 2008, the Ministry of Social Affairs, the National Insurance Institute and the Rashi Foundation came together to establish a network of treatment centers for sexually assaulted children, a public service that did not exist until then. The initiative defined standards for therapy and established an accessible free service across the country.

When the centers became incorporated into the system of public services in 2014, the partners decided to apply the same approach in tackling another issue - children in neglect.

Until recently, there was a lack of awareness, knowledge, diagnostic tools and treatment methods for neglect, and there were no specific intervention services or policy, resulting in children being removed from home or ignored.

In line with Rashi's emphasis on building capabilities and social infrastructure, both Initiatives address unmet social needs by creating nationwide holistic services and professional support for the local social services.

To face the challenge, the partnership combines the strengths of each party - government resources and sustainability, and NGOs flexibility, speed and operational capabilities.

Both initiatives employ operating principles that proved to facilitate success:

* Joint committees for decision-making and operational issues
* Evaluation
* Customized IT system
* Most important, ongoing learning and adaptation during the pilot phase

Outcomes are remarkable: over 65% of the children treated through the new systems show significant improvement on the measured variables; and the community services have adopted new diagnostic and intervention approaches.

Key words- cross-sector partnership, child abuse, child neglect, national policy

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