

# WORLD



# TIMES

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## World ORT to help Ethiopian *olim*

World ORT is gearing up to help a new wave of Ethiopians make *aliyah*.

Building on a 40-year history of helping Ethiopian Jews in Africa and in Israel, World ORT, in coordination with the Jewish Agency, is joining the effort to bring the estimated 20,000 Falashmura to the Jewish State.

The Falashmura are descendants of Jews who converted to Christianity under duress; the Israeli government has decided to double the influx of Falashmura from 300 to 600 a month with the aim of bringing all eligible *olim* (migrants) to Israel by 2007.

Long time senior ORT professional Dr Gaby Meyassed went to Ethiopia in July to report on the needs of the Falashmura, who live in Addis Ababa and Gondar. He found that most of the people waiting to be processed are without work and have limited skills.

"On arrival in Israel, they lack even the very basic knowledge required for the possible jobs available and are clearly unable to decide upon any training course. In the meantime, they become increasingly dependent on charity and welfare and ultimately find themselves excluded from the employment market," Dr Meyassed reported.

He recommended a \$692,000 pre-emigration vocational training programme to train 1,400 men and women in skills demanded in Israel including plumbing, electrical maintenance, catering, agriculture and construction. ORT will design the programme syllabus and supply materials and tools; ORT professionals will also train local people to become instructors and provide ongoing supervision and support.

"This programme has two very distinct advantages," Dr Meyassed said. "First, the training will take place in familiar and psychologically comfortable conditions for the Falashmura and so help them to choose and undergo further vocational training in Israel's unfamiliar surroundings. Secondly, the facilities in Ethiopia are not suitable for teaching or training in their current condition. Participants can, therefore, refurbish the classrooms and workshops as part of their training."

World ORT Director General Robert Singer said negotiations were underway with the UJC, the Federations, the Jewish Agency and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) on the financial and organisational means with which to deal with what is a "very complicated task".

"I am sure," Mr Singer added, "that, as always, when ORT is challenged by the needs

of the State of Israel, we are there to help. I feel confident in our abilities both to raise the funds and implement the project to help these people to increase their chances of success in their new country, Israel."

In Israel, the Ethiopian community faces particular social and economic challenges. According to the Ministry of Education, only one-third of Ethiopian students achieve eligibility for the Matriculation exams, which are necessary to enter university, compared with 50 per cent of the general population.

ORT schools are continually seeking ways to help its many Ethiopian students. At ORT Yad Lvovich, for example, there is collaboration with the Ethiopian National Project (ENP) in helping some 80 students with their studies.

The Director General of the ENP, Nigist Mengesha, met World ORT senior professionals in London recently to discuss future collaboration between the two organisations.

"I think it's important that the ENP works

with ORT," Ms Mengesha said. "ORT worked in Ethiopia for so many years and in Israel it contributes a lot. The ENP sees ORT as a natural partner."

ORT started working to help Ethiopian Jewry in the 1950s. In the 1970s, together with the JDC, it established a full programme – 19 schools employing 73 teachers and educating a total of 1,400 students. World ORT continued to operate International Cooperation projects in Ethiopia until 1999.

## Next Generation in Israel



The World ORT International Next Generation mission flies the flag in front of Mount Zion.

More than 22 young leaders from 12 different countries have come together in Israel for World ORT's inaugural International Next Generation mission.

The participants, aged between 25 and 45, represented ORT organisations from some of the major fundraising countries – the USA, Britain and Switzerland – as well as operational countries such as Russia, Mexico, Uruguay, Ukraine, and Lithuania.

Before leaving for Israel, International Next Generation Co-Chair Shelley Fagel said the timing of the mission – less than three weeks after the disengagement from Gaza – was particularly significant.

"In this period of Israel's history, as its people are trying to facilitate peace, I think it's so important that an international group such as ours will be in the country to discuss what's happening, and to learn about what the people there are going through," she said.

Ms Fagel said she was confident that the mission, part of the action plan devised at the inaugural Next Generation meeting in Paris in December, would be stimulating, informative and fun.

"I have only visited Israel with ORT," the Women's American ORT Board member said. "They have been the most positive and

wonderful experiences."

During the four-day mission, the participants were due to visit several ORT schools, including ORT Netanya-Yad Lvovich and the Bedouin ORT Wadi Salame. They were also due to meet top military, political and business figures.

"Most of the mission participants are already involved in their local ORT organisation but for others this will be their first opportunity to see ORT in action," said International Next Generation Co-Chair Mark Mishon. "I am confident that this experience will spur them on to become the lay leaders of the future."