The Goshen Project is based on the renowned work of Professor Frank Oberklaid and his team at the Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children’s Hospital in Melbourne Australia. Since its founding in the early 90’s the Centre (and other research centres worldwide) has produced highly compelling evidence that to be maximally effective and achieve significant outcomes, the approach to early childhood development and wellbeing must be changed dramatically and must be based on a holistic and multi-disciplinary team effort.

Furthermore, paediatricians and other health professionals in the community must be active players in this effort, and must be integral participants in a multi-disciplinary network of professionals all working towards the optimal development and maximum wellbeing of every child. Only then will we be able to identify and treat various developmental and family problems early on and ensure that each child is able to realize his or her potential.

How will Goshen work in Israel?

One of the most serious challenges that Israel is grappling with today is the need to narrow the very large gaps between “haves” and “have-nots.” Evidence is mounting to show that children growing up in disadvantaged environments are not able to catch up with their more privileged peers and are falling far behind in their educational achievements and ultimately—in, in their ability to function as productive and independent adults. A tragedy for them personally and a tragedy for Israel...whose sustainability depends so heavily on its human resources.

Recognising and adapting to the Israeli context, Goshen aims to bring professionals from all relevant disciplines around a common “table”, all committed to developing strong, enduring collaborative partnerships between health providers and allied health, social services, educational professionals and NGOs.

All will work together in a truly collaborative model focused on facilitating the early identification of emerging problems and risk factors among children, leading to early referral for intervention and family support, and to the actual provision of that critically important support.

The Goshen Project will focus on:

- Establishing successful pilot programs in communities on Israel’s “social periphery” and in Jerusalem;
- Establishing the National Center for Community Child Health at Hadassah in Jerusalem; and
- Building an effective coalition of stakeholders that will demonstrate over a five year period that the paradigm shift initiated by Goshen can be disseminated nationally with the full support of the Israeli Government.

Goshen will serve as an engine to mobilise the public health system as an additional powerful lever for promoting the welfare, development and wellbeing of Israeli children and their families and giving every child the best chance to succeed.
Goshen Steering Committee Announced

The Goshen National Steering Committee has been established with Professor Eitan Kerem, Chairman of the Department of Paediatrics at Hadassah Hospital (and a world-renowned researcher in Cystic Fibrosis) as its Chair.

Professor Asher Ornoy, current Head of the Department of Child Development and Rehabilitation, Ministry of Health (Israel) and Professor Emeritus of Anatomy, Embryology and Teratology at the Hebrew University Jerusalem has agreed to serve as the CEO of the Goshen Project.

Asher's career has been dedicated to childhood development and he is a widely respected leader in the field. (see interview)

Other members of the Goshen National Steering Committee include Professor Basil (Boaz) Porter, Professor Eli Somech, (Chairman of the Israel Paediatric Association), Dr. Manuel Katz, (Chairman of the Israel Ambulatory Paediatric Association), Professor Frank Oberklaid (Director of the Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne) and Ron Finkel (President of Hadassah Australia).

Dr Hava Gadassi, fresh from her two year Fellowship at the Royal Children’s Hospital in Melbourne, has returned to Israel to take on the role of Director of the National Center for Community Child Health and Director of the Academic Program.

Gila Noam, the long-time Director of the Israel Office of the San Francisco Jewish Federation, has been appointed Goshen Strategic Development and National Operations Manager.

The first Goshen Course for Paediatricians

With a great deal of anticipation 43 paediatricians from around Israel - representing the entire mosaic of Israeli society - Jews and Arabs, secular and Orthodox, and residents of big cities and outlying rural areas - met in Ben Shemen on Wednesday evening 16 October to hear the opening presentation of a series of weekly lectures that will provide them with formal accreditation in key aspects of early childhood development.

The course, which is being run in close collaboration with the Rashi Foundation, aims to enrich the doctors’ experience in early childhood developmental and behavioural issues and increase the capacity of the doctors to interact effectively with other (non health) professionals who work in the field and with Israel's disadvantaged communities.

The course aims at enriching the doctors’ knowledge and their capacity to provide effective responses to very common problems which parents of young children are struggling with, and which paediatricians often don’t see as within the realm of their practice:

- When will my baby sleep through the night?
- Are my child’s fears “normal”?
- How should I deal with my child’s thumb-sucking?
- How should I deal with bedwetting?
- How can a paediatrician identify child neglect, and to whom should he turn?
- What can a paediatrician do with regard to a child’s behavioral problems?
- What should be done in the case of a developmental delay; when is intervention necessary; to whom should I refer the family?

These and other issues will be addressed in the course, which will include lectures from Israel’s leading experts, case studies discussed in small groups, and simulations performed by actors.

As the course participants indicated, if they respond to such issues without training, the response will be based on “gut feelings” rather than on professional knowledge.

This is not surprising in light of the fact that these topics receive almost no attention in the training of paediatricians in Israel, which is almost completely hospital-oriented and focused on the problems of hospitalized children, which - naturally - are very different than those of children treated by paediatricians in the community.

Upon completing the course, its graduates will have the tools to:

- Identify and conduct a preliminary evaluation of a broad range of behavioural and developmental problems and help parents understand and cope with their children’s difficulties.
- Effectively screen children in their care and when necessary, refer them to further diagnosis and treatment.
- Guide and counsel parents on everyday problems.
- Relate to the needs of the “whole child” and work in close cooperation with other community professionals in the areas of welfare, health, and education

The course was initiated by the Goshen Project working in cooperation with the Rashi Foundation, and is being directed by Dr. Hava Gadassi from the Children's Hospital at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem.
Prestigious International Award for Goshen Mentor Professor Frank Oberklaid

Professor Frank Oberklaid OAM has received a prestigious award from the Swedish Society of Medicine and the Swedish Paediatric Society. The Nils Rosen von Rosenstein medal is awarded to a distinguished paediatrician every five years. The award to Professor Oberklaid cited his ‘outstanding contributions to the progress of paediatrics, promoting the health of all children.’ He will receive the medal, and deliver an oration, at a formal ceremony to be held in Sweden in 2014.

Professor Oberklaid is the Foundation Director of the Centre for Community Child Health at the Royal Children’s Hospital and Murdoch Childrens Research Institute.

His work has been acknowledged previously in the form of a growing number of state and national awards, including a recent Health Minister’s Lifetime Achievement Award. The academic and clinical work from his centre has catalysed the establishment of the National Center for Community Child Health at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem, with seed funding provided by a number of Melbourne donors under the auspices of Hadassah Australia.

Frank is also spearheading the growing relationship between Hadassah Hospital and the Murdoch Childrens Research Institute, with the recent signing of a formal MOU and plans for collaborative research already well underway.

Interview with new Goshen CEO Professor Asher Ornoy

Goshen News: You’re a paediatrician a leader in your field what drew you in to early childhood development

Ornoy: My main motivation has been to address the clear and unanswered needs for the health and wellbeing of children in disadvantaged communities around Israel; and there are a lot. In 1996 we established a network of Child Development Units and today there are 92 including increasing numbers in the Arab and Ultra-Orthodox communities.

What attracted you to the Goshen Project; after all you represent the Ministry of Health in the National Program for Children and Youth at Risk?

Goshen is taking upon itself a critical task: Creating a critically important change in the face of community paediatrics in Israel -- moving towards looking at the “whole” child and relating to all his needs.

What exactly does that mean?

Ornoy: Goshen will make it possible to resolve many simpler issues that parents are struggling; doing it on-site without the need for referral to other places to get guidance and care. This will solve a huge problem that the health system is grappling with: while the Child Development system has grown, there are still long waiting lists for care, and much of the professional staff’s time is spent on diagnoses and treatment of simple problems. These problems could have been dealt with by providing parents with guidance by the community paediatrician and the multi-disciplinary team that he/she will be working with in Goshen. This has both major (cost-effective)and positive economic implications and will also go a long way to addressing parents’ concerns more immediately.

In addition to his new role as Chief Executive Officer of the Goshen Project, Professor Ornoy is Professor of Anatomy, Embryology and Teratology, Medical Neurobiology at the Hebrew University, and Head of the Department of Child Development and Rehabilitation, at the Israel Ministry of Health.