



## Social Policy & Community Engagement in Haifa, Israel

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### Haifa, Israel

Haifa, Israel's third largest city, sits right on the Mediterranean and is located in the north of Israel. The current population of Haifa totals at around 40,000, with approximately 111,000 housing units being added each year. The city has been built up on Mount Carmel, with more affluent communities living towards the top of the mountain and more communities of lower socioeconomic status at the bottom, closer to the sea.

Haifa is well known for its tolerance of individuals and communities of various cultures, ethnicities and religions, which makes its makeup quite unique. Most residents of Haifa adhere to five main religious faiths, which are Judaism, Christianity, Druze, Islam, and the Baha'i.



### Why Haifa?

The setting of Haifa offered a particularly unique environment in which I could carry out my academic field placement for three and a half months. The city has a goal of shifting its overall community from a mixed to shared society in which all residents, despite religion, ethnicity, nationality, etc. have an equal and equitable stake in the general decision making processes of the larger community. Haifa offered a unique perspective into how the intersection of social, political, and economic challenges have ultimately shaped society as it exists today.

### Field Placement

The Haifa Municipality Department of Community Social Work aims to address the needs of the city's various populations through projects and programming related to:

- employment
- housing
- health care
- psychosocial development

Some of the Department's major program focus areas include work with:

- the aging population
- at-risk youth
- neighborhood revitalization
- community organizing and advocacy
- intercultural dialogue and mediation among global populations

### Projects and Outcomes

#### Asylum Seekers in Haifa

- Held two focus groups and five community meetings with a group of women from Eritrea.
- Identified basic needs of the community
- Conducted outreach and organized meetings with NGOs, religious organizations, and other municipality departments to identify existing services and begin linking the community with programs



### NGO Mapping and Outreach

- Conducted outreach and informational interviews with local Haifa NGOs that aimed to serve the Arab population in Haifa
- Meetings resulted in the organization of a roundtable meeting with the Haifa Municipality to identify program area overlap and potential for collaboration

### Community Programming for Foreign Caregivers

- Conducted a needs assessment with a group of foreign caregivers who work with clients at a local day center for the aging population
- Identified needs relating to language education and advocacy training
- Created an English language program and began outreach efforts to local advocacy organizations that work with the foreign caregiver population in Haifa



### Policy and Program Research

- Conducted research and on global child support policies, feeding into a larger policy advocacy strategy for the Tel-Aviv based NGO, Women's Spirit
- Conducted outreach to US based NGOs to identify best practices for domestic violence survivor-led advocacy programs

### Skills Utilized and Developed

Evaluation: Needs Assessment  
Community Outreach and Coalition Building  
Policy Research and Analysis

### Classroom Connections

SW 697: Practice with Community and Social Systems

Focus on coalition building and meeting facilitation skills

SW 683: Evaluation in Social Work

Gained skills relating to the needs assessment process

SW 522: Basic Social Work Research

Gained skills in research methods and practice

### Career Connections

I hope to apply skills gained in both coalition building and community outreach to my future career.

### Lessons Learned

- When working with communities and program planning, be sure to first work alongside community members to identify needs and goals
- It's important to take initiative, but to also be realistic of what you can achieve in a brief time frame

### Advice

- Language barriers are not insurmountable – but patience and a sense of humor are key!
- Be open to new people, experiences, and places
- Start thinking early about how you can apply coursework to a global field placement

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