



HELP for HAITI

Helping Haiti

World ORT expertise can help Haiti's post-quake reconstruction.

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Shalom in London

Israeli Minister Sylvan Shalom addresses British ORT's 'best ever' Gala Dinner.

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UN tribute for ORT's 130th

Ban Ki-moon, ambassadors praise ORT's efforts to bring education to the world's most vulnerable people.

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Making Israel smarter

World ORT is at the forefront of a three-year, NIS 47 million project to install more than 400 "smart classrooms" across the north of Israel.

Through its programmatic arm in Israel, Kadima Mada, World ORT is investing NIS 16 million to bring 21st century technology to 72 relatively under-resourced Jewish and non-Jewish schools to the benefit of some 40,000 students a year.

The Minister for Development of the Galilee and the Negev, and Vice Prime Minister, Sylvan Shalom, said ORT's support would bring a better future for those living in this outlying region.

Mr Shalom's department is putting NIS 15 million into the programme and the Ministry of Education is providing 120 hours of training over two years for each of the 3,600 teachers using the technology, worth some NIS 7 million. Municipalities will undertake the necessary refurbishment of the classrooms to accommodate the new technology, earmarking an estimated NIS7 million over three years for the work.

The new classes "will enable children in development towns to get everything they need to get an education" Mr Shalom told the British ORT Gala Dinner.

Supporting such communities was not only helping current residents to stay in their homes, it was helping Israel in its goal to settle more people in those areas, away from the crowded Tel Aviv conurbation. And in giving disadvantaged children the opportunities that only good education can bring, World ORT's Kadima Mada programme was strengthening the country as a whole.

"I know that you are very much committed to the safety and security of the State of Israel," Mr Shalom said. "With your support and your commitment, I am sure we can bring a better future to those who live in the Negev and the Galil already as well as for those who plan to live there. I thank you for helping ORT, for while helping ORT you are helping us."

He and Education Minister Gideon Saar wrote to the mayors of Nahariyah and Megiddo in January informing them that their areas were to be the first to benefit.

"[This] is a significant step in the ambition to brand the Galilee as an area of excellence in the subjects of science and technology through innovative teaching and learning technologies. The infrastructures will allow access to digital content, experiencing a new way of studies in a 'smart class' and the use of state-of-the-art equipment with the emphasis on science and technology," they wrote. "We are convinced that this project will give a significant donation to strengthen the school system in your city."

In 2008, Kadima Mada tripled the number of such high-tech classrooms in Israel by equipping 60 rooms with Interactive Whiteboards (IWBs), wireless Internet connectivity and other technological aids in six campuses and providing on-going teacher training in their use.

A favourable independent evaluation of the pilot programme by the Henrietta Szold Institute – The National Institute for Research in the Behavioural Sciences, based in Jerusalem, promises a significant impact on the educational performance of the Jewish State.

"The evaluation reinforced international findings that all children became very involved in the lessons and concurred that the biggest improvement with regard to lesson participation was to be found in

children with learning difficulties," said Hanan Rubin, Kadima Mada's Smart Classes Project Manager, who is handling the expansion of the pilot programme.

"We hope that once we put 'smart classes' in each of the new schools then the municipality will buy more of them like they did at Horfeish, one of the pilot schools, where the local administration raised funds for this purpose. We hope to be planting seeds of technology and skill-led educational enhancement," Mr Rubin said.

In addition to the standard laptops for everyone in the class, the new programme will provide teachers with a tablet PC so that they can walk around the room interacting with pupils individually. And a 'voting kit' which allows for spontaneous multiple choice tests during class will allow teachers

insight into just how well their students are following a lesson.

Minister Shalom said that the new technology would "inevitably lead to a reduction in the social gaps that now exist between the northern and central regions of the country" bringing about "an educational and social revolution".

His Ministry's Director General, Orna Housman Behor, said the cooperation with Kadima Mada provided fertile ground for unlimited possibilities in developing advanced educational frameworks. "This is a fantastic project and I'm very proud to be part of it," Ms Housman Behor said. "I have no doubt that in another three years we will reap the fruits – students excelling in their studies, an exceptional school system and educational and social achievement."

Preparing a new wave of Israelis



One step closer to the Promised Land as they strut down Mumbai's Worli Seaface, some of ORT India's Manipuri students enjoy time off from classes in hairdressing, bakery and Hebrew studies. Teen students belonging to the "lost tribe" of Bnei Menashe often arrive at ORT from landlocked Manipur in groups of 20, spending anything from six to 18 months depending on the courses they have chosen and their aptitude for advanced lessons. Ariellah Guite, 25 (centre, in green), has been at ORT for the better part of the year, working towards a degree in Early Childhood Education. "Every day, we're waiting to go to Israel," she said. ORT India's pre-aliyah training programme is generously supported by the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. Photo: Amit Chakravarty. Used with the permission of Time Out India.

Citroen backs ORT Argentina

One of the world's leading car manufacturers, Citroen, has donated a C4 sedan to ORT Argentina's Comprehensive Centre of Design, Art and Technology (DAT).

The sleek, new \$25,000 car will shift up by a gear or two the work done by students at ORT Belgrano High School's unique DAT centre. Currently, the high school students are using a Citroen 3CV – a model which dates back to the early 1960s – to explore and implement a full range of design work and modifications. Their incorporation into the car of, among other things, a central onboard computer and an interactive touch screen multimedia system is so impressive it is to be displayed at this year's Buenos Aires International Motor Show. And it has stimulated Citroen to up its support of the DAT centre's work.

"We were convinced we had to help," said the Director General of Citroen Argentina, Luis Maria Basavilbaso, at a ceremony to hand over the keys of the C4 to ORT Argentina President Dr Hector Rosenzvit. "We will continue to visit and to support the development of this project step-by-step because it is very interesting and we believe it is just what our country needs."

ORT Argentina National Director Adrian Moscovich said: "We are extremely grateful to Citroen Argentina; this donation deepens the collaboration between the company and the school to the benefit of all."

Mr Basavilbaso was taken on a tour of the DAT facility, which is located in the schoolyard and is fully equipped to enable students to dismantle and reassemble a car as well as conduct the full range of design work and modifications.

Designer Jose Luis Denari, who has led the Citroen CV3 project since its inception in 2007, said: "A project of this type is unprecedented in Argentina's school system; the students are replicating the same patterns of work of the most advanced international design centres."

Participating student Andrew Moritan said everyone involved was "very proud of having made this project such a success".

The DAT centre's Citroen project is an example of how ORT Argentina's high schools are geared to improving students' learning performance according to scientific and technological advances, social demands and students' own requirements, said the Principal of the Belgrano campus, Viviana Jasid.

"We constantly seek new challenges



Driving ahead: Citroen Argentina Director General Luis Basavilbaso hands over the keys to ORT Argentina President Dr Hector Rosenzvit.

in order to offer our students the widest possible range of multidisciplinary learning experiences that are developed in real life situations and with the involvement of

outstanding professionals," Ms Jasid said. "With each new project we increase the motivation of our teachers, our students and their families."

High profile support for ORT Montreal

One of Canada's most distinguished diplomats, Raymond Chretien, was the guest of honour at ORT Montreal's 26th Annual Benefit Gala.

During his 38 years of diplomatic service, Mr Chretien was Canada's ambassador to France, the USA, Belgium, Mexico and the Congo.

"I was privileged to be honoured by ORT," Mr Chretien, now a partner and strategic advisor at leading Canadian corporate law firm Fasken Martineau, told the 700 people who packed out the Place des Arts in Quebec's largest city. "As I learned about ORT I realised that it is doing great educational work in many of the countries where I have served as a diplomat."

Mr Chretien, who in 1996 was appointed as the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy to the Great Lakes Region of Central Africa, added: "I like ORT's very practical approach to education. And the fact that one of the best universities in South America is run by ORT brought home to me the scope of its activities. I am invited to participate in many events but since this one ORT has a new friend in me. ORT can count on me to do whatever I can. We will keep in good contact."

ORT Montreal President Edita Friedman said the evening had been a great success, not only in terms of attendance and money raised for ORT projects around the world but also for raising the organisation's public profile and increasing knowledge of its work.

"Having someone of the stature of Raymond Chretien to be our honouree will help us to meet our objective of continuing to raise that profile," Ms Friedman said.

Ms Friedman, whose parents-in-law were among the 80,000 Holocaust Survivors trained by ORT in the Displaced Persons camps of liberated Europe, said Mr Chretien embodied some core ORT values: recognition of education's critical importance and a vision of making the world a better place by fostering international cooperation.

She told the crowd at the Gala, which included Israel's Consul General Yoram Elron, prominent Quebec politician Lawrence Bergman, and Gerry McCaughey, President and CEO of major financial institution CIBC, which was the event sponsor: "I look to the future with great optimism and believe that collectively we will continue to make dreams become a reality for young people who depend on us to give them a chance to make a difference."



ORT Montreal Gala honouree Raymond Chretien (centre) with, from left, ORT Canada National Director Emmanuel Kalles, World ORT Chief Development and Public Affairs Officer Sonia Gomes de Mesquita, ORT Montreal President Edita Friedman, and Gala Chairman Erle Shrier.

Exploring the virtual frontier at Wingate

It is an exciting time for education and this year's World ORT International Wingate Seminar has taken teachers straight to where the action is – Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs).

The technology behind VLEs is developing rapidly and encompasses a wide variety of on-line spaces – anything from learning platforms to content delivery systems, and management of information systems.

Exploitation by schools is patchy but their potential to supplement traditional face-to-face classroom activities, to provide remote access to curriculum material, and to create tools for the assessment and marking of students' work is enormous.

Thanks to the support of the Harold Hyam Wingate Foundation, 19 educators from 12 countries came to ORT House, London for the Seminar's exploration into how VLEs can be used by their school communities.

"I think we're looking towards a future where there will be more parental access and more remote access," said ICT Education Consultant Ray Tolley, who led Seminar participants through a history of the evolution of VLEs. "At one time a child would come home and the parent would ask him what he had done at school and the reply would be 'not a lot'. Now a child comes home and logs on and shows his parents what he has done. And with the remote access of VLEs, parents will have already seen their child's work and can welcome him home with a 'well done'."

The developmental strides of VLE technology could have massive ramifications for World ORT.

"We strongly believe that we can develop a common learning space for all our educational institutions throughout the world and so give us another tool for sharing educational expertise," said World ORT's Chief Programme Officer, Vladimir Dribinskiy.

However, the critical factor is the attitude of the teachers themselves, said Daniel Needlestone, eLearning Coordinator at a school near London and Chair of the Jewish Teachers' Association, who gave Seminar participants insights into the practical aspects of managing a VLE.

"The VLE is not an end in itself, it's just a part of the process of learning; it's an extra tool to engage students," he said. "It is changing the way that people teach. And it is definitely motivational for students. VLEs reflect the changes in the way that children learn. Children have technology and it's not something that we can turn off in the classroom."

Among the Seminar participants was ORT Chile National Director Marcelo Lewkow who was enthusiastic about using VLEs for international collaboration.

"We want to see the possibilities for the two ORT-supported schools in Chile to link with ORT Argentina's Virtual Campus," Mr Lewkow said. "This would have two advantages: we would not have to buy or develop our own virtual tools and we could use Argentina's material because we share the same language, have a similar culture and a similar core curriculum. I hope that this would be something that could eventually extend to other Latin American countries."

Message from the Director General



An organisation is only as good as the people working for it. It is an old adage whose truth is exemplified by ORT. Shortly before writing this, for example, we at ORT House had the good fortune to spend two days with senior educators from ORT France. Many of them are graduates of ORT institutions and have served ORT outstandingly for several decades. They are investing their lives in the preparation of young Jews who may take up leading roles in their communities and professions. Each year I visit ORT organisations around the world and repeatedly meet people of a similarly high calibre. There is no doubt in my mind that our collective strength depends on these individuals and I am proud and humbled to be able to count them amongst my friends and colleagues.

But ORT also relies on lay leaders who guide its strategic development. We are lucky to have among our leadership President Dr Jean de Gunzburg, his deputy, Gene Ribakoff, Chairman of the Board of Trustees Mauricio Merikanskas, Treasurer Judy Menikoff and Secretary Martin Behr. All of them lead by example, their personal generosity and their wisdom. The same goes for our national organisations with new leaderships at ORT America (see page 5), British ORT, ORT Argentina and ORT Italy giving us great cause for optimism.

But even as we look to the future we must not forget those who have given so much to ORT in the past. In this issue we remember with gratitude Guillermo Lutzky and Joe Cohen. Joe was involved in ORT for almost his entire adult life, his extensive lay leadership contributions culminating in the creation of ORT America (obituary, page 6). Guillermo was a senior professional at ORT Argentina and was for a while National Director of ORT Bolivia. His technical genius was a spur to innovation (obituary, page 4). Both men will be sorely missed.

With such talent and dedication in our ranks we have not only managed to face up to the extreme financial challenges of the past year but have been able to extend a welcome to three new schools in Mexico, Tallinn and Kishinev and two new centres in Georgia. In Israel, we have added 160,000 beneficiaries thanks in part to new contracts with the government.

Unfortunately the Jewish character of our 17 schools in the Former Soviet Union still hangs in the balance because of the crisis precipitated by JAFI's withdrawal of funds. We continue to work closely with Jewish communities and the Israeli government to stabilise the situation.

After Pesach, ORT will launch its operations to help Haiti's post-quake reconstruction. With partners in Britain and Mexico and working closely with UNESCO and other agencies we aim to train 4,500 construction workers in quake-resistant techniques. We are preparing other projects as a member of the coalition, managed by the Joint Distribution Committee, which is spearheading the Jewish response to the disaster. In this our 130th anniversary year we have much to be thankful for and much to be proud of as ORT continues to lift people out of despondency and dependence. This mission, as I explain in an interview which can be viewed at <http://www.ort.org/asp/article.asp?id=923>, remains unchanged since the organisation's founding – a constant force for good which deserves to attract the fine people who support ORT.

Robert Singer

Helping Haiti to rebuild

Amid the rubble and heartbreak of Haiti lies an opportunity to rebuild the country's education system – and World ORT is one of the best organisations for the job.

Experts Daniel Kahn and Igal Guez spent a week in Haiti to investigate how World ORT, which is a member of the Coalition of Jewish Disaster Relief, can put its 130 years of experience in education and training to work realising positive changes in the country's socio-economic fabric in the aftermath of the 7.0 magnitude earthquake which killed more than 200,000 people in January.

"World ORT is maybe the best organisation for the task," said Mr Guez, a former research and development engineer at DuPont who is now the award-winning principal of the Har Vagai High School in Israel. "I dream that an ORT school will open there. So much money is being given to Haiti; if just part of it is directed to education then a good organisation like ORT can step in and show how it's done. And the country may then find ways to build on that example. By setting up just one good school, ORT would contribute a lot to Haiti's future."

He and Mr Kahn, whose career in education, social welfare and international relations has taken him from France to Israel and across Africa and South East Asia, met local businesspeople, NGO personnel, politicians, diplomats and educators.

"Everyone we talked to was eager to see World ORT come to Haiti," said Mr Kahn. "World ORT has the appropriate structure to rehabilitate vocational education there."

They are putting together a series of projects which, money permitting, can be set up quickly and to great effect.

One is to open new sections – one for 15- to 18-year-olds, the other to train vocational teachers – at the massive Haiti Tec technical training school, which was founded with the support of American Airlines, Florida's St Thomas University, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the Miami Herald and six Haitian business associations.

In a telephone conference with 50 senior representatives of North American Jewish Federations, Mr Kahn said World ORT's ideas had received favourable responses from senior UNESCO officers.

Among them are a residential 10-day



Loving Haiti: Igal Guez, World ORT representative in Haiti, meets young survivors of the earthquake. With him are two Israeli volunteers.

training course on earthquake-resistant building techniques for 1,000 construction workers per year for four years; a vocational school for children aged between 15 and 18 in an "Israeli Children's Village" whose construction is being planned by MASHAV, the Centre for International Cooperation at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and a preparatory year for young people about to enter university in which students would be offered free tuition in return for working part time in the refugee camps.

With the appropriate financial backing, World ORT could implement its project ideas efficiently and transparently

through its non-sectarian International Cooperation Department (ORT IC). Its website (www.icd.ort.org) details how ORT IC has provided meaningful support to disadvantaged people in every continent except Antarctica and Australia – more than 350 projects in nearly 100 countries since 1960.

ORT IC's work has received support and praise from organisations such as the World Bank, Hewlett-Packard, the United States Agency for International Development, the Coca-Cola Foundation, the United Nations and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation.

ORT's first school in Mexico

Work has started to make Mexico's oldest Jewish school one of the best in the country now that it has formalised its affiliation with World ORT.

More than 600 people gathered at the Colegio Israelita de Mexico (CIM) for the ceremony to witness what all agreed was an historic moment in the development of the 40,000-strong community.

Now known as CIM-ORT, it is the first school in Mexico to affiliate with World ORT and it is hoped that by taking it to new heights it will stimulate improvements in other Jewish schools and enable the community to rationalise resources where individual schools are unable to lift their game.

"This is a dream come true," said the Chairman of World ORT's Board of Trustees, Mauricio Merikanskas. "We expect CIM-ORT to be a world class school within three years. This is going to help the Jewish community – and Mexico – a lot."

Technology entrepreneur and Chairman of the school's governing body, Dan Ostrosky, emphasised the merger's communal significance.

"This is a very, very important evolution, not only for the school but for the community," said Mr Ostrosky, a systems engineer with a Masters degree in artificial intelligence. "The world has changed in recent years and globalisation is the name of the game. Being part of World ORT means becoming part of a global network which will bring international best practice to our school. We will be able to raise the skills of our teachers and attract better teachers."

ORT Mexico President Arturo Merikanskas said that there were now fewer options for Jewish children to enter family businesses so a strong, relevant education was more important than ever.

But with 16 Jewish schools, each serving ethnic, religious and ideological sub-groups, overcapacity and competition is seen as an obstacle to efficiency and efficacy. The creation of an ORT school in Mexico City would deliver opportunities for wider reform and advancement, said ORT Mexico National Director Jimmy Salinas.

"We want to differentiate CIM-ORT by raising the quality of its education and

replicate the experience of ORT's return to the Former Soviet Union. There, ORT invested in the schools so that Jewish parents wanted to send their children there because of the quality of the education, not just because it was a Jewish school," Mr Salinas said.

ORT's collaboration with the school stretches back some 30 years. In that time, ORT has provided IT, science and technical training programmes and, four years ago, ORT Mexico inaugurated a Media Training Centre at the school which serves students from all the local Jewish day schools as well as young adults seeking to widen their skills base.

ORT Argentina is providing critical support to CIM-ORT, helping it to apply its highly successful programmes, curricula and technological tools. These include two-year post matriculation diploma courses enabling teenagers to enter the workforce directly from school, laboratories for the studying of robotics, science, maths and languages, and comprehensive courses in Microsoft Office for junior students.

De Gunzburg Seminar wows South Africa

Jewish Studies teachers in South Africa have been wowed by the practical insights offered by the latest Terry and Jean de Gunzburg Jewish Education Seminar, which was held in Johannesburg.

This Seminar, which presents an opportunity for teachers to learn how to use modern technology in the teaching of Judaism's timeless wisdom, is the first of the series to cater to primary rather than secondary schools.

As in the previous de Gunzburg Seminars in Rome, Buenos Aires and Kishinev, the teachers in South Africa have been full of praise for the learning opportunities presented them.

Darryl Frankel, Deputy Principal of King David Linksfield Primary School, which hosted the Seminar, said: "It's been unbelievable; such an eye-opener in terms of what's out there because in South Africa we're a bit behind the IT times. To expose the teachers to the resources that are out there for Jewish education has been a complete eye-opener. We're all very motivated to take what we have learned here and present it to the rest of the staff at our schools."

Gila Ash, a teacher at Johannesburg's Torah Academy, said she loved the Seminar.

"It's been the most motivating, inspiring seminar," Ms Ash said. "It's unbelievable to see what modern technology is out there and how it can be combined with teaching *kodesh*. Thank you ORT for an unbelievable privilege to be part of this seminar; it's been amazing. And to think how many kids will benefit from such programmes; it's very special."

The Head of World ORT's Education Department, Daniel Tysman, said the Seminar was just what was needed to jump start the process of incorporating



Class action: World ORT has motivated Jewish Studies teachers from across southern Africa to use modern technology.

technology into Jewish Studies classes.

"Many of the 27 participants had hardly used PowerPoint or the Internet at all in their teaching. In terms of equipment, many of them have not got access to an Interactive White Board or a projector at their school. Some of them don't even have computers at school."

The diversity of the participants contributed to the exciting atmosphere: the teachers ranged from strictly Torah observant

to non-Jewish, from schools across South Africa and also Namibia and Zimbabwe.

"We want to develop an on-line community of teachers from across southern Africa," Mr Tysman said. "In this way they will be able to share resources."

Among the highlights of the Seminar was a live link with Sha'ar HaNegev School in Israel where Jewish Studies teacher Atar Gaibel demonstrated the use of the Interactive White Board (provided to

the school by World ORT through its programmatic arm in Israel, Kadima Mada) in the teaching of Genesis. Ms Gaibel gave a similar presentation to the de Gunzburg Seminars in Rome and Buenos Aires last year. And the Head of ORT South Africa's Education Empowerment Division in Gauteng, Ariellah Rosenberg, gave a presentation on creating virtual networks to carry on the personal and professional relationships established in the Seminar.

Tributes flow in for Guillermo Lutzky

The ORT family was shocked by the sudden, untimely death of Guillermo Lutzky, the brains behind ORT Argentina's hugely successful Virtual Campus.

Mr Lutzky passed away in his sleep less than a month after seeing the Virtual Campus come of age by allowing ORT Argentina's students to keep learning despite a government-ordered schools closure to contain the swine flu pandemic.

An ORT alumnus, Mr Lutzky worked as a systems analyst before returning to the ORT high schools in Buenos Aires as an educator.

As a teenager, Mr Lutzky was a shy but committed student; as an adult, he won the respect and love of colleagues and students alike for his humour, passion, intellect and sensitivity.

ORT Argentina National Director Adrián Moscovich said: "Guillermo had excellent personal and professional relations with everyone in all his fields of action. He was an intellectually gifted man, eager for innovation, for knowledge and truth – a firm custodian of ORT's name and fame all over the world."

Mr Lutzky was renowned for his technological expertise and developed two computing curricula for ORT Argentina's two high schools. However he was far more than a computer science teacher: he developed, coordinated, monitored and evaluated academic and research activities at ORT Argentina, and designed the organisation's long term computing strategy. He spearheaded the introduction of multimedia, the Internet and ubiquitous



Guillermo Lutzky z"l, 1963-2009

computing at ORT in Buenos Aires which culminated in the implementation of the Virtual Campus. And he was an inspiring basketball coach.

In 2004 he set up ORT Bolivia and, as National Director of ORT Bolivia, created the Instituto Tecnológico Boliviano Israelita. He went on to become a consultant for the country's Ministry of Education in the launching of an integrated humanistic-technological curriculum for high schools.

World ORT Director General and CEO Robert Singer said it was difficult to express the sense of deep shock and sadness felt on learning of Mr Lutzky's death.

"He had a vision and he pursued that vision with dedication and a keen sense of purpose," Mr Singer wrote in condolence letter to Mr Moscovich. "He saw the potential that modern technology provides to advance the education of young people,

and he set about to create an environment in which he was able to realise his dream... Guillermo was taken from us while in his prime. He had accomplished a lot, but he had so much more to give."

World ORT's Education and Technology Department, whose members frequently collaborated with Mr Lutzky, said it had always been a pleasure to work with him.

They wrote to Buenos Aires saying: "He was innovative and dynamic and committed to bringing the best of the modern world to the field of education. His recent work to create ORT Argentina's Virtual Campus rightfully earned him recognition and plaudits around the world. It stands today as a testament to Guillermo, to his vision and to his skill."

Milan opens up with ORT

A world of opportunity has opened up for Milan's Jewish Community School with its signing of a cooperation agreement with World ORT.

The agreement facilitates and expands academic, technical and administrative cooperation to allow the implementation of best educational practices at the school for the benefit of staff as well as its 530 students.

The first step is the creation of a cutting edge ICT laboratory at the school, which will enable students to interact with Jewish schools around the world, and the training of teachers in computer-assisted methods of education.

School Principal Ester Kopciowski is excited by the prospect of returning to the close ties with World ORT that existed when she started at the school in the 1980s.

"I am very happy; it's something I have worked for for two years," Ms

Kopciowski said. "This agreement means the beginning of a very new way of teaching for us. And it is an interesting way to have the possibility of interacting with the world of ORT and to have a wider perspective. This is a great opportunity for a little school like ours."

The President of ORT Italy, Roberto Jarach, who is also Vice Chairman of the Milan Jewish Community, was instrumental in making the agreement a reality. He said increasing the connectedness of the community was an existential issue.

"The Jewish communities in Italy are threatened by their smallness – even in Rome – and barely have the numbers to run activities such as schools," Mr Jarach said. "So it is very important to keep the schools alive as a link to the future. And being part of the ORT network helps our schools with new ways of teaching."

British ORT backs Israel

Israel's Vice Prime Minister, Sylvan Shalom, headlined British ORT's Gala Dinner which has been hailed as the best ever.

Mr Shalom praised British ORT for its campaign to support the building of a new, safer campus for the Sha'ar HaNegev High School, whose 1,170 students have suffered from years of rockets fired from neighbouring Gaza.

In a stirring speech to the 260 people at the Gala Dinner in London, Mr Shalom, who is also Minister for Regional Development and the Development of the Negev and the Galilee, said: "What we're trying to do is to give these children a normal life, the possibility to live in peace and quiet. The rocket-proof building that you are financing at Sha'ar HaNegev will help the children who live there to stay there without fear. I thank you on behalf of those children."

The dinner, which was sponsored by JP Morgan, raised £365,000 (\$608,000) towards a reinforced, high-tech science and technology centre for the new campus.

In a video shown at the event, Sha'ar HaNegev Principal Aharon Rothstein emphasised that a good, safe school was essential for the survival of the whole community.

"To stay here we have to promise people the best," Mr Rothstein said. "It's not a question of whether or not we can do it. It's a question of existence."

Simon Alberga, who was making his first address as British ORT Chairman, highlighted the significance of ORT's 130th anniversary.

"It is nothing short of miraculous that ORT has not just survived but has prospered for so long through numerous wars and political and economic upheavals," he said. "I believe our extraordinary durability is testament to the continuing strength and relevance of our cause... to provide Jewish people around the world with the education and skills they need to lift themselves out of poverty and lead meaningful and dignified lives."

World ORT President Dr Jean de Gunzburg paid tribute to British ORT's lay leaders and professionals for doing a "terrific job".

"I've never seen a British ORT event as good as this one," Dr de Gunzburg said. "It's showing the right face of the organisation, doing it the right way."

The day after the Gala Dinner Dr de Gunzburg co-chaired a meeting at ORT House with Mr Shalom to discuss the work done by its operating arm in Israel, Kadima Mada.

"This was the first time that a vice prime minister of Israel has visited ORT House," World ORT Director General and CEO Robert Singer said. "This is a tribute to our activities in Israel. We were very impressed by the plans of the Vice Prime Minister and World ORT will be honoured and happy to be part of these different initiatives because our programmatic focus is in the peripheral areas that the ministry is responsible for."



High praise: Sylvan Shalom addresses the British ORT Gala Dinner.

All change at ORT America

ORT America's new president, Shelley Fagel, has signalled her determination to make the organisation change with the times.

"ORT America must be as cost-effective as it can be so that as much money as possible goes to our students around the world," Ms Fagel said in her inaugural speech at the ORT America Triennial Convention in Chicago. "Change is not easy but change we must. Some of the changes will be an evolution, they'll happen slowly. Some of the changes will be more like a revolution – they will happen quickly and effectively."

Ms Fagel takes over from Doreen Hermelin, who steered the organisation through its first three years as a unified entity following the merger of American ORT and Women's American ORT.

Ms Fagel said that she looked forward to securing the organisation's future and spoke of the need to keep pace with technological changes and to draw in new members while nurturing existing supporters.

"We must never forget the sturdy foundation on which ORT has been built but we need to move our organisation into this fast paced society in which we operate," said Ms Fagel, whose commitment to ORT started some 30 years ago with the founding of a chapter of Women's American ORT in Naperville, Illinois.

"I know that the [new] Board of Directors... is made up of innovative, creative, forward thinking individuals who will not allow ORT to be stagnant. They bring a wide variety of skill sets which will help us as we navigate the path between the tried and true and the innovative, creative and new," she said.

Ms Fagel said she would work closely with the organisation's National Executive Director, Alan Klugman, and newly-elected Chair of the Executive Committee, John VerStandig, to implement a new marketing strategy using social media to attract new and younger supporters. And lay leaders and professionals would work together to develop an integrated approach to fundraising, membership and marketing.

She paid tribute to her predecessor's energy and enthusiasm saying Ms Hermelin had brought together the inaugural Board of ORT America "in some of the most difficult times that ORT in the United States had seen".



New line-up: Shelley Fagel (centre, standing) with John VerStandig and Doreen Hermelin standing to her left and members of ORT America's newly elected Board of Directors.

In her final address as President, Ms Hermelin acknowledged the challenge of the task with which she had been presented three years ago.

"For two fine organisations to come together as an even more effective single entity was a *shidduch* of monumental

proportions," she said. "Yet the marriage of Women's American ORT and American ORT has emerged even stronger and is flowering with amazing global initiatives and more supporters for ORT."

And she declared complete confidence in her successor.

"ORT continues to be a force for growth worldwide and there could be no more dynamic force to make it happen than Shelley Fagel," Ms Hermelin said. "I know that she will take this organisation to new heights of accomplishments and recognition at home, in Israel and around the globe."

ORT school for South Africa?

South Africa is looking to ORT for inspiration in creating a quality vocational education system that may involve the founding of the first ORT school in the Rainbow Nation.

A high-powered delegation comprising influential ANC Member of Parliament Kenzani Kubayi and top representatives of the Service Sector Education and Training Authority (Services SETA) toured ORT institutions in Paris and Moscow to see 130 years' accumulated expertise in action.

At ORT France's superbly refurbished Montreuil high school the delegation learned about the vocational courses on offer in IT, dental prosthetics, optics and business management, some of which can be pursued up to the equivalent of a Master's degree. And at the ORT Technology College and ORT Technology School in Moscow, the

delegation was shown how ORT provides a full range of services, from pre-vocational school level up to adult education and on-going career development

Services SETA Board Member Richard Findlay said he was very impressed by what he had seen.

"We need to decide whether what we saw can be replicated in South Africa and, if it can, how do we go about doing it. It may be worthwhile going back for a second look. This is not something that will happen overnight; it's a big project. It's a question of slowly, slowly catchy monkey," Mr Findlay said.

In the meantime, Services SETA, which uses taxation on companies in service industries to improve workers' skills, partners with ORT South Africa in training

and education programmes in Jewish and non-Jewish schools.

ORT SA's Head of Marketing, PR and New Projects, Carol Rod, was also on the delegation.

"Definitely, this trip has taken us a step closer towards realising our goal of having an ORT school in South Africa," Ms Rod said. "Seeing what ORT is achieving in Paris and Moscow – and how impressed the delegates were – has left me feeling so proud of being part of this world organisation."

ORT France National Director Marc Timsit said he was very pleased with the visit. "In this era of globalisation these are just the kind of exchanges and experiences we should be having," Mr Timsit said. "It is important for us to transcend national borders."

ORT IC goes it alone for islands' tsunami survivors

Desperately poor communities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, off India, dare to hope again five years after being decimated by the Asian tsunami. *Stefan Bialoguski reports.*

On a recent visit to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, ORT India National Director Benjamin Isaac was moved by the signs of regeneration and hope he found there.

"There has been such a change from what I found when I first visited the Islands in January 2005, a few days after the tsunami," Mr Isaac said. "It was very gloomy then: roads would crumble beneath your feet, refugee camps were overflowing and there were people begging. It was terrible. Now the region is opening up. There is already some tourist traffic and the potential to make this an international, five-star tourist destination. And it's all because of the work by government, the local people and by NGOs, including ORT."

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands had the misfortune of lying close to the epicentre of the earthquake which triggered the tidal wave. More than 45,000 people – one-in-ten of the population – were killed.

Mr Isaac was visiting the Islands with ORT International Cooperation (ORT IC) Project Coordinator Celeste Angus to inaugurate three of the five new IT laboratories installed at local schools as part of the Andaman and Nicobar Education Quality Improvement Programme (ANEQIP). ORT IC manages ANEQIP, which is funded by the JDC, the Jewish Coalition for Asia Tsunami Relief and the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington.

The creation of the IT laboratories marks the first time that ORT has directly implemented a project there rather than provide a local NGO with funding, administrative assistance and oversight.

"After three years in the Islands our local partner, Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana (BJS), left so we had to go it alone," Ms Angus said.

That meant extensive efforts by Mr Isaac to forge the contacts necessary to enable ORT to be accepted as a legitimate aid organisation, to identify educational needs and organise a practical and timely response.

"BJS is very well known in India so it was easier for them to operate. It has taken a lot of work to gain the trust of the local authorities," Ms Angus said. "NGOs have often rushed into disaster areas, made lots of promises and then didn't follow through. We have shown the local people that we at ORT actually do what we say we'll do. The fact that the local education department has allowed us to operate on the Islands and to install the laboratories and provide the teacher training is a sign of their confidence in our ability to do the job."

ANEQIP comprises 12 programmes implemented by ORT IC with ORT India and BJS at 20 primary, middle and secondary schools and benefiting more than 12,500 children. The programmes include computer education, the installation of school administration software, a management training programme, a teacher training programme, a disaster management programme, school accreditation and extra curricular activities.

We have shown the local people that we at ORT actually do what we say we'll do.

ORT IC has also been helping tsunami survivors on the south-east coast of Sri Lanka through the Improved Livelihood Programme with local NGO partner, the Shilpa Children's Trust. This includes the provision of counselling, technical assistance and training programmes through the Sri Lanka Trauma Counselling and Vocational Training Project. And a generous grant from the JDC has enabled ORT IC to reconstruct roads, improve families' access to water and markets, and upgrade irrigation and drainage for paddy fields.

Before ORT came to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands the schools' lack of



Thumbs up: children at Chouldari School join their Principal, Paramjeet Kaur (right) in welcoming (from left) BJS Director Hemant Misra, Benjamin Isaac, Mrs Misra, and Celeste Angus

facilities meant that only 45 minutes of IT could be taught per child per week – and then each computer had to cater for eight students at a time.

"Nothing was learned," Mr Isaac said.

ORT India Project Manager Elkaan Palkar travelled from Mumbai to supervise the purchase, delivery and installation of the 41 computers and related equipment at the five schools.

Mr Palkar joined Mr Isaac and Ms Angus in celebrating the three inauguration ceremonies, which also attracted the Principal Secretary of Education (Andaman and Nicobar Administration), Archana Arora, and the Director of Education, Sanjay Kumar Saxena. They also visited the two other schools which had earlier inaugurated their ORT-provided laboratories.

"Everyone was so appreciative for what ORT had done for them," Ms Angus said,

adding that multi-media CDs designed as study aids for the national tests in science and other subjects as well as projectors were also being provided. Mr Isaac added: "In two of the schools they are now able to offer IT as a subject for senior students and the Board of Education has approved the necessary teachers. So you can see there's a snowballing effect."

These improvements follow on from the demonstrable progress made by the 20 schools which ORT has been helping through ANEQIP, from increased attendance and motivation to a marked improvement in exam results.

The successful teamwork of ORT IC and ORT India has cleared the way for ORT to directly implement further programmes and plans are underway to provide IT laboratories to a further five schools.

American ORT's last president

Joe Cohen, the only ORT graduate to have made president of American ORT, has died after a five-year battle with cancer.

It was as President that Mr Cohen steered American ORT through its historic merger with Women's American ORT. But he had served the ORT movement in many ways over many years.

Forced to leave his native Egypt in 1956, he arrived penniless in Paris with his brother. Joe was unable to find work and he and his brother would eat tins of kosher food warmed up with candles.

Joe enrolled at the ORT school where he qualified as a plumber. Thanks to his fluency in Arabic he was able to find a way back into white collar work. He explains how with characteristic good humour in an interview which can be seen on YouTube (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LiVak_rOTaA).

For seven years he worked and studied in the French capital before moving to

Atlanta where he became a partner in the accounting firm of Birnbrey, Minsk, Minsk and Perling.

But his friend and fellow ORT lay leader, Hilly Panovka, told the ORT America Triennial Convention, "Joe never forgot what ORT did for him and he showed his dedication for the rest of his life."

A founding member and co-chair of World ORT's 1880 Society for major donors, Joe also served as a member of World ORT's Control Commission and Board of Directors as well as Honorary Chair of its Board of Trustees. In 1990, he was President of the Atlanta Chapter of American ORT when it was named Chapter of the Year. He was a co-founder of ORT America's Lipson International Studies Exchange Programme, which brings ORT students from Israel and other countries to Jewish day schools in Atlanta.

He was named American ORT's 'Man of the Year' in 1997, received its Yitzhak Rabin Award in 2002, and named ORT Atlanta's 'Man of the Year' in 1998 and 2007.

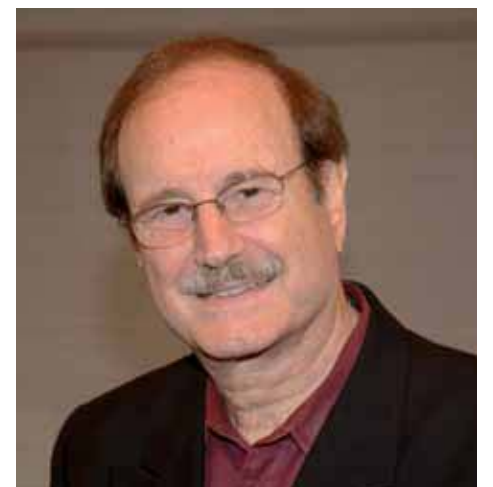
"By advancing the work of ORT, Joe has directly impacted the lives of thousands of disadvantaged students all over the world – giving them the same opportunity he was privileged to receive," Mr Panovka said.

His commitment to ORT is being perpetuated through the Joe Cohen Scholarship Fund, annual income from which will be distributed to needy and deserving ORT students.

An official statement released by the ORT leadership said: "A beloved mentor and true *mentsch*, Joe was distinguished for his unique style of leadership and amazing first-hand knowledge of everything ORT. He was praised as a gentleman's gentleman, a practical, down-to-earth thinker who possessed a great

sense of diplomacy and fairness, and was a skilled and consummate national fundraiser on behalf of ORT students."

He leaves his wife of 40 years, Phyllis, children Steven, Fran, Jodi and Shon, and three grandchildren.



Joe Cohen z"l, 1936-2009

A brighter future for Kav Or

More than 120,000 children every year stand to benefit from World ORT's plan to upgrade educational facilities in Israeli hospitals.

Thanks to a major donation by the Swiss-based SASA Setton Foundation, World ORT's programmatic arm in Israel, Kadima Mada, is forging ahead with its initial four-year expansion of the Kav Or programme.

Kav Or (Ray of Light) was founded in 1993 by Dr Bilha Piamenta and Dr Amnon Shinar to supplement services provided by the hospitals' schools.

World ORT plans to install Interactive Whiteboards, develop distance-learning services such as upgrading the Kav Or website, train teachers, and strengthen the role of volunteers in 27 public hospitals from Eilat in the south to Tsfat in the north.

Hilda and Philippe Setton, who set up the SASA Setton Foundation in memory of their children Sarah and Samuel, said of their support for the Kadima Mada-Kav Or programme: "We want to help World ORT's project ensure that hospitalised children are alleviated of their anxieties and can focus on ordinary daily activities; this is essential to their emotional and physical recovery."

Mr and Mrs Setton visited the first two hospitals to benefit from the programme; it was, they said, "inspiring" to see the impact new computers had made at Hillel Yaffe Hospital in Hadera and Soroka University Medical Centre in Be'er Sheva.

The World ORT programme works in

cooperation with Israel's Ministries of Education, Health and Welfare, the Prime Minister's Office and the more than 300 volunteers who provide close support for the children.

"And we fully coordinate everything with the principals and staff at each of the hospital's schools," said World ORT's Chief Development and Public Affairs Officer, Sonia Gomes de Mesquita. "Together we are building a programme which will be suitable to meet the needs of the children coming in for treatment at each of the hospitals. Our aim is to support the hospitals' schools in developing all the lessons and curricula they need to bridge the gap between the children in hospital and their peers in the regular schools."

The Director of Soroka's Education Centre, Esther Friedman, is delighted by the Kadima Mada-Kav Or partnership. Soroka has long enjoyed the benefits of working with World ORT through the Kadima Mada SMILE project, in which local 10th grade students help to bring friendship and scholarship support to young patients.

Ms Friedman said the new technology provided links between the hospitalised children and their friends and teachers outside at any time of the day or night – a real boost to the patients' morale as well as helping them to keep up with their studies.

"Their [regular] schools represent health and wellbeing and connecting to these items, and studying, brings them back to



Hilda and Philippe Setton (third and fifth from right) visiting the Hillel Yaffe Hospital with (from left) Eti Lahav, Head of Paediatrics Dr Adi Klien, Kadima Mada Executive Director Rony Kalinsky, Kadima Mada-Kav Or Programme Director Avi Ganon, Hospital Director Dr Meir Oren, teacher Korin Weizmann, World ORT Director General and CEO Robert Singer and Principal Ofra Abargil.

things which are familiar from the healthier part of their lives," she said. "They put in the patient's mind that they are healthy, that they will live. What we're doing is a very big part of the child's recovery."

The education programme's contribution to healing was also emphasised by Dr Adi Klein, Head of Paediatrics at Hillel Yaffe, which has a large Arab client base.

"We know from many studies that when we are not occupied we feel pain much

more than when our minds are busy," Dr Klein said. "The computers which we have been donated from Kadima Mada are being used every day. I can assure you that before we received this help, children – especially teenagers – were lying in bed with absolutely nothing to do. Now they have a day programme and educational and fun activities. It makes their stay here much more pleasant – as much as a stay in hospital can be."

Molecular to stellar – teens' research stuns judges

The judges for this year's World ORT-Weizmann Institute Excellence Award for teenaged scientists were confronted by entries which were impressive not only for their precociousness but for their diversity.

"This year was very interesting because of the range of topics, from medical research to chemistry, nanotechnology and physics," said World ORT Research and Development Coordinator Dr Yakov Ronkin, who acted as Coordinator of the Award Committee.

"The entrants' schools were also diverse and included a religious school, a kibbutz school and an art-science academy. It was very nice to get the products of such a wide spectrum of the Israeli education system. And I was very pleased to see we had more girls than boys," Dr Ronkin added.

The top place was shared by 18-year-olds Gail Weiss and Emily Elhacham, each of whom received a \$4,000 university scholarship.

Gail impressed judges with her research into making an efficient programme to describe the trajectories of stars without sacrificing accuracy. By applying a standard technique in an unusual way she counter-

intuitively succeeded in increasing both accuracy and efficiency.

Emily's research tested the feasibility of nano-sensors to detect low concentrations of organic pollutants in water.

The awarding of a joint first prize was a sign of how high the standard was across the board, said the Chairman of the Award Committee, Professor Shimon Vega.

The choice is always difficult and I was very impressed by the finalists. They all did a beautiful job," Professor Vega said. "It's really special to see there are young people who know what it is to do science. Gail's computer code, for example, was really at a high level; it was amazing. But even if they get help, at the end of the day they have to do it themselves. And these are committed people: they spent many hours, days and weeks in the laboratory. They are exceptional."

The finalists had been among the 82 entrants from across Israel who presented their research to the Davidson Institute for Science Education at the Weizmann Institute of Science.

The third place prize of a \$2,000

scholarship went to Or Misrachi, who investigated the gonadotropin-releasing hormone agonist for protection against premature ovarian failure during cyclophosphamide therapy in women with systemic lupus erythematosus.

Science books were awarded to the fourth- and fifth-placed finalists, Michael Simon and Shahar Gvirtz.

Michael's project set out to characterise

a new receptor found on the surface of lymphocyte cells and Shahar investigated a new reaction to produce and purify silicon – an important element in the electronics industry – which required lower temperatures than the procedure currently in use.

The prizes were funded by the UK-based Kennedy Leigh Charitable Trust and World ORT.

Mada-Na exhibition's magnetic attraction

World ORT has established a ring of five interactive exhibitions which will travel between host towns in Israel to entice children to study science.

The last of the exhibitions – on the theme of electricity and magnetism – has opened in Tirat HaCarmel, whose Shifman High School is a long-time beneficiary of World ORT's Kadima Mada programme.

The exhibitions, which also cover mechanics, waves, optics, and liquids and gases, together form a Mobile Science Museum and comprise Phase 10 of Kadima Mada – a major programme of investment in the technological infrastructure and teacher training at high schools in more than 30 municipalities throughout Israel.

Each exhibition has 15 installations designed and developed by Danny Ovadia – a 2008 co-recipient of the Beatrice Wand-Polak award given by World ORT to outstanding educators. They are housed in the Eshkol Payis communal science and art buildings in the peripheral municipalities of Kiryat Yam, Neshet, Tirat HaCarmel, Misgav and Ma'ale Yosef

– each one adjacent to a school which participates in Kadima Mada. Every six months the exhibitions will rotate between the host communities.

Tirat HaCarmel physics teacher Shelly Yonah, who is responsible for running the exhibition, said: "I am very happy; this exhibition is a dream-come-true. Its interactivity brings what is an abstract subject down to Earth. It opens the students' eyes to physics; it makes them ask questions and gives them an opportunity to try things themselves. It makes them more curious about physics. Even children I don't teach, those who have never even learned physics, they walk around and they start to wonder what physics is and whether it's something that they should learn."

The Mayor of Tirat HaCarmel, Arieh Tal, told the opening ceremony: "By investing in this generation, future generations will benefit because there will be more scientists and we will have a generation which supports rather than needs support."



Full of promise: talented students (from left) Gail Weiss, Emily Elhacham, Shahar Gvirtz, Or Misrachi, and Michael Simon with Professor Shimon Vega (third from left) and Dr Yakov Ronkin (right).

UN celebrates 130 years of ORT

ORT is a valued partner in global efforts to achieve education for all, according to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Mr Ban sent greetings to a celebration of ORT's 130th anniversary at the UN headquarters in New York, which attracted 150 people – representatives of 28 countries as well as leaders of major Jewish organisations.

Stressing the importance of education as an essential factor in reducing poverty, promoting stability and stimulating progress, he said: "I welcome ORT's efforts to reach out to vulnerable people in more than 100 countries who have been denied education because of poverty and social exclusion."

In an era of multiple crises, people were increasingly looking towards the UN for solutions, Mr Ban continued.

"People want results. To deliver, we must be united in purpose and united in action. We must work with all partners – including organisations such as ORT, which has done so much over so many decades to improve people's prospects and well-being. Thank you for your contributions and please accept my best wishes on the occasion of your anniversary."

The gathering heard from three people whose lives testified to the diversity and impact of ORT's work – Israeli Knesset member Shaul Mofaz, South African Paul Magula and Holocaust Survivor Robert Frimtzis.

Mr Mofaz's late father was Principal of an ORT school in Iran before the family made aliyah in 1957.

"In a day and age when incitement is rife and an equal education for all is more of a slogan than a reality, education for peace is crucial," Mr Mofaz said. "Providing students with vocational skills equals giving them hope. Giving thousands of people a value-oriented education means allowing



A world of difference: World ORT Board of Trustees Chairman Mauricio Merikanskas, Shaul Mofaz MK, Director of UNESCO's New York office Christine Alfsen-Norodom, and World ORT President Dr Jean de Gunzburg.

them the choice of being connected to a 5,000-year-old heritage. Doing all this while also embracing the statutes of peace is altogether a mitzvah. I would like to salute this important organisation – and its dedicated workers throughout the world – for promoting one of the more noble human needs: education."

Mr Magula said he owed his life to ORT. Despite acquiring two degrees at Cape Town University, he was unable to find a job until he graduated from ORT South Africa's Siyaphambili Work Readiness course. Now married with children, Mr Magula enjoys a successful career in banking.

And Mr Frimtzis described his journey from a Displaced Persons camp in Italy, where he made up for years of lost schooling thanks to ORT courses, to life

in the USA where he became a leading engineer on the historic Apollo mission which took Man to the Moon.

They embodied ORT's vision to promote education and prosperity for the world, a vision which reminded Israel's Ambassador to the UN, Professor Gabriela Shalev, of Anne Frank.

"As the world around that young woman was consumed by war, hatred and antisemitism," Professor Shalev said, "young Anne wrote the following: 'How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.' Such words reflect the ethos that has defined the work of ORT. You have shown that we do not have to wait to make a positive difference in the lives of those who face challenges, hardship

or suffering. To the entire community of ORT and its supporters: your work and leadership serve as an inspiration to us all."

World ORT President Dr Jean de Gunzburg, a direct descendant of ORT co-founder Baron Horace de Gunzburg, reminded the gathering that it was also the 50th anniversary of World ORT's International Cooperation department, which serves communities irrespective of colour, creed or "any of the other artificial barriers that tend to divide us".

The Chair of World ORT's International Cooperation Advisory Committee, David Woolf, said: "It was very meaningful that so many ambassadors of countries in which we operate attended our celebration. It highlights the importance of ORT's work among non-Jewish communities."

UNESCO award for ORT Russia Vice President

ORT Russia's Vice President, Professor Alexei Semenov, has been awarded the 2009 UNESCO King Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa Prize for the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in Education.

Professor Semenov was selected as the co-winner of the \$50,000 prize from among 39 contenders in 29 countries. Within days of the announcement, Professor Semenov was collecting the Prize of the Government of the Russian Federation from Prime Minister Vladimir Putin for his leading role in the successful implementation of a \$120 million World Bank-funded project to provide e-learning support for the country.

Professor Semenov – a member of World ORT's Academic Advisory Council and Board of Representatives – was chosen for his work as Rector of the Moscow Institute of Open Education where he has provided in-service training to about 30,000 teachers annually for the past 16 years.

A key figure in the return of ORT to Russia, Professor Semenov acknowledged the role his experience with the organisation had played in his success.



Professor Alexei Semenov

"I think the ORT connection gave us a lot of belief in our own efforts and gave us a vision of what can be achieved independently of local circumstances; it gave us the ability to contextualise our local experience by looking at the experience of others around the world and during the difficult economic times of the 1990s reminded us that things would get better," he said. "The technology studies which were brought to our schools with the help of ORT were of a world class standard – not just the equipment but the implementation of project-based learning."

Professor Semenov is a Correspondent Member of the Russian Academy of Science and the Russian Academy of Education, which ranks him in the academic elite alongside the President of ORT Ukraine, Professor Dr Yuriy Yakimenko, who is an Academician of his country's National Academy of Science, and ORT Russia President Professor Alexander Asmolov, who is an Academician of the Russian Academy of Education.

ORT IC helps disabled in Montenegro

World ORT's International Cooperation department (ORT IC) is helping disabled people in Montenegro to work, rest and play.

Thanks to funding from the US Agency for International Development (USAID), ORT IC is setting up a labour exchange for disabled people and building a specially equipped 25-bed lodge at a remote recreation centre.

"USAID had set aside \$2 million in grants specifically for projects to help people with disabilities. ORT IC applied for the maximum individual grant of \$300,000 and got it. It's far and away the largest budget awarded by USAID out of this grant round, amounting to 15 per cent of the total," said the Director of ORT IC's Washington bureau, Celeste Angus.

The grant is a sign of USAID's confidence in ORT IC after seeing the results of its support for ORT IC's Montenegro Advocacy Programme (MAP), a recently completed eight-year effort to develop civil society organisations in the Balkan state.

Claire O'Riordan, ORT IC's Chief of

Party in Montenegro, said ORT MAP had strengthened the rule of law in Montenegro by enabling the NGO sector to make the government more accountable.

"When I started here the NGO sector was very scattered and disorganised. We provided systematic training and management skills. We built up the NGO sector to function with more developed advocacy functions then we developed its watchdog functions," she said.

Among ORT MAP's successes: an HIV/AIDS organisation which worked with health authorities to shorten the waiting time for supplying retroviral drugs from three months to five days; construction workers who have gained the protection of health and safety rules; and pregnant women who are increasingly secure against losing their jobs.

Ms O'Riordan was confident that the new project, working with the Association of Paraplegics of Montenegro (APM) and Koraci (Steps), would make a similarly productive contribution to Montenegrin society.

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