



**ELIFELET.** **2023**



## Executive Summary

Since its inception in 2012, Elifelet's mission has been to ensure the safeguarding, education, and well-being of status-less children and their families in Israel.

In 2023, we further strengthened our support to ensure a more comprehensive response to the acute needs of the children, in spite of the immense challenges posed by the internal conflicts within the Eritrean community and the onset of the war in Gaza.

### **Our After-school Clubs and Enrichment Program**

Our cornerstone project, the Elifelet after-school clubs, continues to evolve with over 300 children taking part in 2023, ensuring them a safe haven every day from the end of the school day until 17:00. This past year we focused our activities on developing resilience, teamwork, and STEM education, introduced a new robotics class in partnership with the FIRST global program, and enhanced our music offerings through a collaboration with the Tel-Aviv Jaffa Music Center.



### **Special Education**

Acknowledging an unmet need, we opened this year a special education program tailored to children with unique developmental and educational challenges. This ensures personalized support for each child with a ratio of 3 staff members working with 13 children.

### **Third Pre-teen Center**

To respond to demographic changes within the asylum-seeking community, we opened a third center for 4th to 6th graders. This expansion not only accommodates the growing number of older children in need of a positive space to spend their after-school hours, rather than loiter, but also provides a tailored program to help boys and girls as they face the challenging pre-adolescent years.

### **Case Management and Intervention**

In 2023, in response to the high volume of needed interventions, we expanded our social welfare department, which now holds two social workers handling case management, building interventions, and advocating for the children and families' rights and needs, all in cooperation with the school counselors and welfare department.

### **Therapeutic Program**

During the course of 2023, 50 children took part in either individual or group, weekly therapeutic

sessions. Our program is delivered by M.A. students of social work, art therapy, movement therapy, and play therapy - all under supervision. We were able to increase the scope of the program in September 2023 with the addition of a part-time psychodrama therapist.

### **Mentoring and Tutoring**

Our volunteer-based tutoring and mentoring program continued to grow in 2023, with 65 volunteers offering weekly one-on-one or group meetings throughout the school year. Our beginning and end of the year mapping showed the remarkable impact on the children receiving tutoring, including improved well-being and social skill development.

### **Remaining Steadfast in Time of Instability**

In a year marked by instability, with turmoil within the Eritrean community and the outbreak of war in October, Elifelet has managed to provide continued support to the children and their families, through home visits, ongoing welfare support to the families, as well as increased humanitarian aid to those hard hit by the war. This proactive approach offered immediate needed assistance while ensuring minimal interruption to our programs, returning to routine by mid-November.



## Supporting the Integration Pilot

Since September 2023, Elifelet has played an active role in the integration of status-less children into Tel Aviv's educational system, sharing knowledge and best practices with schools and after-school programs, to support the needs of the children taking part in the pilot program initiated by the Ministry of Education and Tel Aviv Municipality.

As we reflect on our achievements in 2023, Elifelet remains committed to accompanying children and their families in their immediate 'here and now,' while also fostering strategies for resilience and long-term development. Our efforts are not just about addressing the children's basic needs; they are about helping them build a thriving future for themselves and their community.

According to the Population and Immigration Authority data (July 2023), there remain in Israel about 24,000 refugees from Eritrea and Sudan and about 8,200 of their children. Estimates tell of an additional 800 children of foreign workers and children of labor migrants.



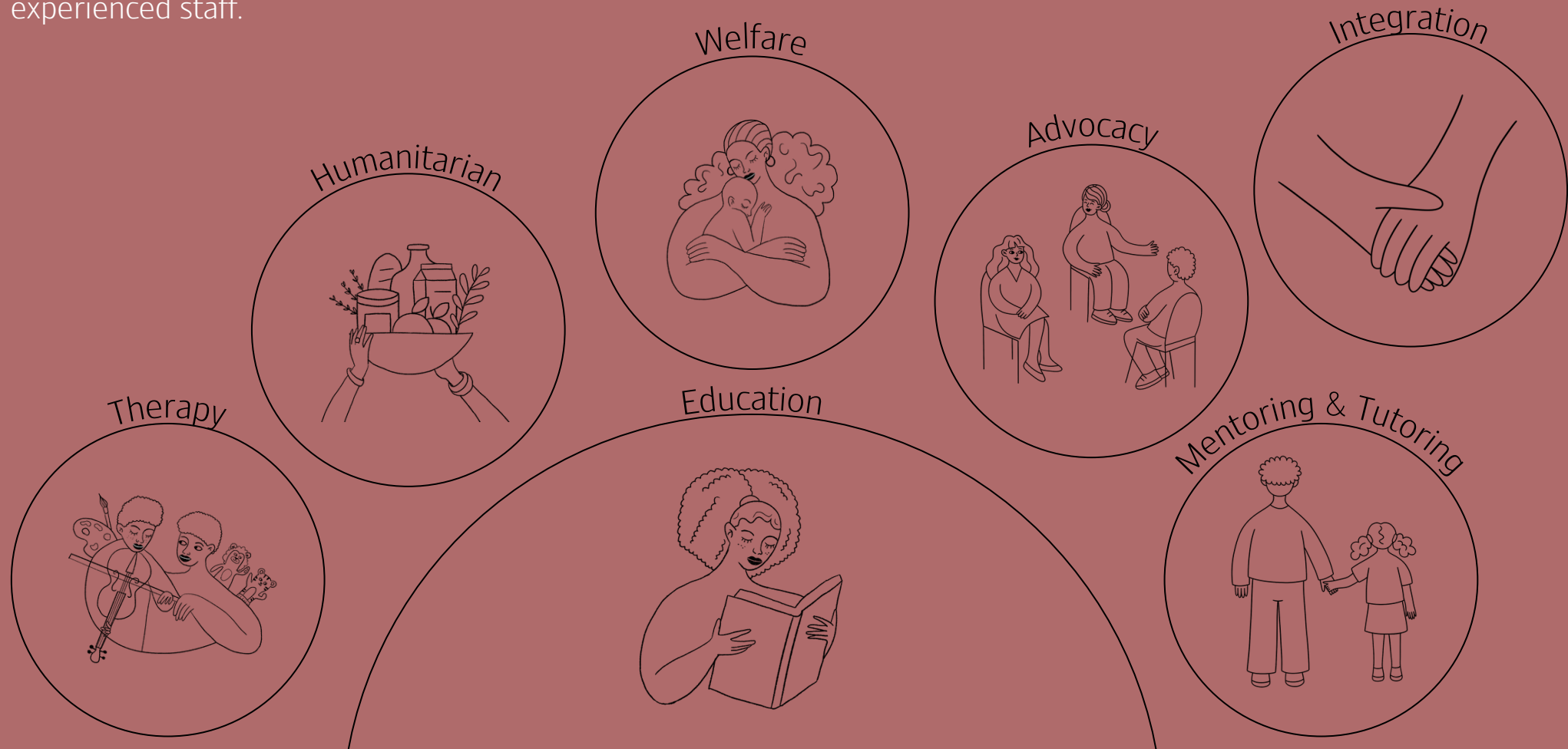


## 2023 Activity and Impact Report

2023 was marked by an in-depth professionalization of Elifelet's array of support services and the expansion of our existing response offerings.

In 2023, we focused our organizational efforts on the expansion of our supplementary support services enabled thanks to our competent and experienced staff.

Elifelet's core program continues to operate informal-education programs in South Tel-Aviv for children grade 1-6. The programs run from the end of the school day until 5 PM and include a meal, educational assistance, a wide array of enrichment activities, and an extensive package of psychosocial and humanitarian support for the children and their families.



## Program Overview 2023

### Welfare



In light of the increase in required interventions we expanded our program's capacity and now engage two social workers.

### Education



Throughout 2023 over 300 boys and girls took part in our informal-education program.

### Therapy



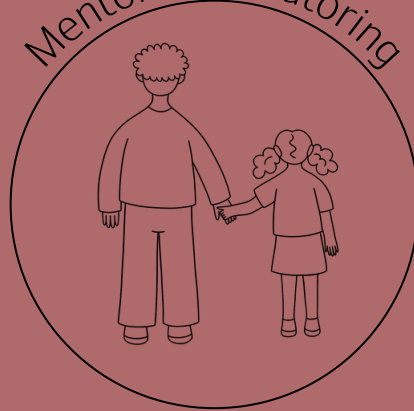
Individual or group therapy was granted to over 20% of children in our programs in accordance with their needs as mapped by the staff.

### Humanitarian



Following the outbreak of war on Oct 7th, we doubled the number of recipient families and established a cooked-food distribution network to aid those whose work has been downsized.

### Mentoring & Tutoring



Over 25% of children were assigned personal tutors-volunteers from the general public, who aid the children with academic and social skill development.

### Advocacy



In addition to lectures for the general public, we produced videos and translated up to date, relevant information for the families.

### Integration



We provided lectures and guidance to operators of the after-school programs in integrated schools in order to aid the success of the ministry of education's pilot program.





## First Thing's First - Elifelet's Clubs

The structure of our cornerstone program remained unchanged, with two staff members guiding groups composed of approx. 20 children each. Running from the end of school hours until the early evening hours (including a light meal, educational assistance and enrichment activities) the program serves as the foundation for our growing array of welfare, psychosocial, and humanitarian support offered to the children and their families.

During the course of 2023, Elifelet provided support to over 300 boys, girls, and their families - totalling over 1,200 beneficiaries.

## Enrichment Activities for 1st-6th Graders

Elifelet's choice of extracurricular activities has been purposely designed to improve physical and personal resilience, develop creative thinking, better teamwork skills, and provide access to a multitude of enriching fields in which each child can discover his or her own strengths and interests. A special emphasis is placed on gender accessibility, with gender-mixed sports for lower grades.

This school year, we strengthened our STEM offerings to include a robotics class in collaboration with high-school students from the global FIRST program. Furthermore, in 2023 we continued the expansion of our music program in collaboration with the Music Center Tel-Aviv Jaffa with the addition of music classes for 1st graders, a choir and guitar lessons.







### Third Graduate Center Opening

Demographic changes in the asylum-seeker community, such as decreasing birth-rate, relocation to third countries, and internal migration to other cities, are leading to the decreasing number of registered lower-grade students and the increase in net and proportional make-up of 4th graders and higher in our after-school program. These shifts have led us to the opening of a third graduate center in the current school year.

The increase in participation of children 4th grade and older, despite their ability to return home unaccompanied, testifies to the need of these children for a safe and supportive after-school environment, and the trust of the children and their parents in our programs.



## Special Education

Upon the new school year we have opened a dedicated special education after-school club for 1st and 2nd graders. Additional special education children have been enrolled in integrated clubs according to their abilities and requirements.

Two coordinators and a special education aid compose the group's staff, guided by a fieldmanager and a social worker.







## The Holistic Array of Responses We Offer:

### **Social Support**

Almost half of the children enrolled in our after-school program are of single-parent households and most of them are of households known to social services authorities. The lack of legal status translates to a lower socio-economic standing, high prevalence of acute illnesses among the parents, and the lack of adult presence in the afternoon hours as the parents work.

Throughout the year, in response to the increase in imperative reporting and intervention needed, we have expanded our social support program, which now compose two social workers dedicated to case management - investigation, designing interventions and accompanying the families - all synchronized with the work of the school guidance counselors and Mesila (the municipal welfare division responsible for undocumented migrants).

### **Individual and Group Therapy**

Therapy is offered to those children who struggle with emotional regulation and face difficulties at home.

The therapy sessions are provided by graduate

students of Social Work, Psychodrama, Movement Therapy and Educational Guidance, all under supervision, as well as by volunteer professional therapists.

### **Humanitarian Assistance**

In light of the difficulties mentioned above and as a result of the lack of resources and the difficulties of migration, alongside the loss of employment in times of crisis (such as the reduction of work hours by many restaurants during the war), many families find themselves in need of financial support for things such as the purchasing of basic food items, baby formula and diapers. Elifelet provides bi-weekly support packages to 55 families, in coordination with other assistance provided by welfare services, delivered to each families' doorstep by our dedicated team of volunteers.

### **Mentoring and Tutoring**

Tutoring is offered to those children who require help with their studies and/or social skills. The mentors begin following a vetting process and orientation and receive ongoing guidance.



14

Students and professionals volunteers providing therapy

49

Children have received individual or group therapy

65

Mentoring and tutoring volunteers

55

Families receiving regular humanitarian assistance

22

Cases requiring intervention in collaboration with Social services.



Weekly Market for the Families



## Summer Activities and Day Camp

Even during school holidays Elifelet continues to operate full force with day camps from the morning until the afternoon hours, with special outings, meals and all support programs.

This year, our Passover Spring Camp included a world music day and an archaeology themed day, our summer camp was enriched by the generous hosting of Kibbutz HaMa'apil and Kibbutz Haogen at their pools, and a shared outing to the Safari with the employees of SodaStream and their children. For Sukkot, the children in our day camp enjoyed giant floor games activities, a recycling themed day and more. All the aforementioned is possible through our collaborations with companies who engage their employees' time and fund the activities, as well as the longstanding and always heartwarming hospitality of multiple Kibbutzim who have been hosting us for years.







## In The Face of Turmoil

The current school year commenced just a moment before riots broke out within the Eritrean Community on September 2nd. Over 170 Asylum Seekers were injured and dozens of policemen, in an event which saw the police firing live ammunition on protesting crowds in the heart of Tel Aviv. This event and ongoing tensions have resulted in fear and shock among many parents of the community, many fearing to send their children to school, and some even suffering injuries themselves. Still today tensions prevail among the community, impacting the daily lives of many families.

The onset of war on October 7th has met the community in an already vulnerable and fragile state, to which was added the concerns over lack of bomb shelters in most homes, the full or partial closure of many places of employment and a lack of accessible, up to date and vital information in the languages spoken among the communities.

**Within two days of the outbreak of war our staff returned to operation with the knowledge and understanding that in these times, more than ever, we must assist those who remain invisible amidst the multitude of suffering and needs among the general public.**



## Providing Shelter

Throughout the entire initial period of fighting, our educational team maintained constant and daily contact with the children, initially via phone and zoom and later conducted house visits to all and every of the over 200 children.

As soon as we received the final authorization from Home Front Command, and in coordination with the Tel-Aviv Municipality, we began conducting activities for children in the neighborhood bomb-shelters.

Soon after, and even before the complete return of the schools, we opened our clubs five days a week in order to allow the parents to return to work and to guarantee the children a safe place to stay, access to a shelter and nourishment.





## Emergency Humanitarian Assistance

Only a few days after the war began when we received calls of distress from families whose work and, consequently their income, have been reduced and with no savings or safety net to fall back on.

In response we took immediate action and doubled our humanitarian program to support 94 families (over 400 recipients). Additionally, we distributed food packages, baby formula and diapers to 40 asylum seeker families who were evacuated from the surroundings of Gaza to Nitzana, and to a further 50 Sudanese families living under fire in the south of Israel through representatives of the community.

We also set up hot food distribution points in the neighborhoods of Neve Sha'anani, Shapira and Hatikva, in which the majority of families reside. For the period of two months, bi or tri weekly distribution of 200 meals took place, depending on the supply of donated meals from the Assif and Ha'achim restaurants, each of 200 meals.

With the arrival of cold weather, we circulated the overflowing civilian collection points and gathered excess items of clothing for children, which we later redistributed to the asylum seeker families in an open market of winter clothes, shoes and winter coats.

Many on our team of club coordinators, all young women and men, lost friends in the events of October the 7th. In the last months we have increased the emotional support provided to our team by a clinical social worker who assists them with the processing of difficulties while providing valuable coping strategies.

## Integration Pilot

### A Brief Background

In Tel Aviv there are four schools in which the entirety of the student body are children without status (the majority of which were born in Israel to asylum seeker parents, and a minority of which are children of migrant workers).

A number of organizations in the field, among them the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and the Clinic for Law and Education Policy, filed a petition opposing the current segregation. The case advanced all the way to the Supreme Court. In a court session held in June 2023, The Ministry of Education and the Tel-Aviv Municipality offered to initiate a pilot program to integrate 96 1st graders into schools in central and north Tel-Aviv.

The start of the current school year saw the beginning of the pilot program in 11 schools across the city.





## Our Viewpoint

The good of the children has been our priority from the onset. As an organizational stance, which has taken shape throughout our years, Elifelet operates where the kids are, in an effort to help them and their families in the here and now, and to ensure them a beneficial childhood and a promising future. To this end Elifelet collaborates with other organizations in the field working to promote policy changes for the future to come.

It is with this conviction that we began our work in the 'babysitters', the improvised daycare centers in which the majority of the children were raised. From there we continued our work by opening our own

after school centers in an attempt to curb unsupervised wandering in the afternoon hours. These days, we operate in two of the four schools in which over 800 children without status are enrolled.

Reality entails complexity, within which we navigate our work, proudly running the informal-education program within the existing schools as the municipal partner, in collaboration with the dedicated staff at the schools, all while working to aid to the pilot program for the integration of the children in schools across the city and as partners of organizations promoting policy change.



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**Our work is made possible thanks to the generosity of thousands of donors, volunteers and partners from the country's entire social spectrum. We cherish and appreciate their support.**

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**ROUND UP**  
SMALL CHANGE  
BIG CHANGE

## **ELIFELET.**

Elifelet - Citizens for Refugee Children

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Support Us: [www.elifelet.org](http://www.elifelet.org)

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Elifelet is proud to be a partner in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

**1** NO  
POVERTY



**2** ZERO  
HUNGER



**3** GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING



**4** QUALITY  
EDUCATION



**5** GENDER  
EQUALITY



**10** REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



**17** PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS

