



**ELIFELET**  
CITIZENS FOR REFUGEE CHILDREN

**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2021**



In the past two years, Elifelet has experienced many changes, as well as significant growth in the scope of activity and numerous adaptations according to the varying needs in the field.

While the organization's goal remained the same – providing statusless children with a wholesome childhood while creating a supportive, holistic environment for them – the nature and scope of assistance have changed substantially. The COVID-19 pandemic, demographic changes, and the Law of Daycare Supervision coming into effect, effectively turning most unauthorized daycares illegal, have forced us to readjust our activity.

**In this summarizing report for 2021, we hope to provide you with the most precise picture possible regarding the reality of statusless children in Israel, present everything we were able to do for them this past year, and what we plan on doing for them in the future.**





## Meet Netanel

Netanel (not actual name) made it to the 1st grade this year after barely attending kindergarten last year. His mother was afraid to send him to kindergarten due to the pandemic, and she was home anyway after losing her job as a cleaning lady during the first lockdown. When Netanel or his mother are asked where Netanel's father is, their answer is quite vague. Anyway, it's clear that the mother raises him and his sister by herself.

Netanel spent the first years of his life in Melody's unauthorized daycare ("babysitter") while his mother worked long hours. Like the other "babysitter-kids," Netanel spent hours in the playpen, in a room packed with children and empty of activities, with no sufficient attention, no suited stimulation, and with a caregiver from Ghana who spoke to the children in basic English. Therefore, when Netanel started going to school, he was suffering from various developmental delays, emotional regulation difficulties, and an evident language delay.

Netanel's experience at school is not easy. He is often tired due to a lack of sufficient sleep and has a hard time sitting in class and participating. Nevertheless, Netanel does his best, and in the mornings, he sometimes manages to participate in classes. Come lunchtime, though, he falls apart.

During Covid, Netanel's family moved in with another family. Netanel, his mother, and his sister share a bedroom that also serves as a living room. Netanel's mother does her best to survive. She works in the mornings, and after Netanel falls asleep, she leaves him – for the lack of a better alternative – with his 10-year-old sister, and goes out to work again.



Netanel was referred to Elifelet's after-school program by the social worker accompanying the family. Despite his fears and hesitation, he quickly became attached to the counselor and Ben Sherut who operate the after-school program, he has friends, games, and food, and he particularly enjoys Doron's theatre club. And still, the afternoon hours are especially hard for 6-year-old Netanel. He arrives at the after-school program for five hours after already having spent five hours at school. After forcing himself to keep it together for an entire school day, Netanel tends to throw temper tantrums. **Netanel is a typical kid in Elifelt's after-school programs.**

Children at Elifelet's after-school programs are often referred to them by the school counselor or a social worker from Mesila. Like most asylum seekers, these are kids who grow up in unauthorized daycares, 30% of whom grow up with a single mother, and all of whom grow up in poverty-stricken homes. Their parents arrived at the Israeli border in the early 2000s, after surviving their escape journey from their respective origin countries. Most of them suffer from PTSD and do their best to survive.

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Of approximately 10,000 statusless children in Israel today, 70% still reside in Tel Aviv, most of whom are in kindergarten or middle school. The birth rate among asylum seekers is descending.

## Psychosocial and Pedagogical Assistance Alike

**The Elifelet nonprofit, after operating for many years within unauthorized daycares, is now working to assist those same infants as they grow older.**

The nonprofit is attentive to the changing needs of the children and formulates its solutions after mapping the existing situation in the field and conversing with the communities; and in collaboration with all the other entities operating in the field, recognizing the significance of synchronization between all the different systems taking care of the children.

**We've identified that currently, the children's most acute needs** are safe and enriching afternoon programs, emotional-developmental assistance, educational assistance to bridge the gaps – mostly, but not only, in the language department – and social-humanitarian assistance to the families struggling with day-to-day survival.



# EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

This year, thanks to a fertile collaboration with the Tel Aviv-Yafo municipality, we were able to widen the scope of our after-school programs, growing from 100 kids last year to 240 kids today, and our activity in this area continues to grow.

The after-school programs serve as steady afternoon care for the kids and include emotional therapy, personal educational guidance with focused attention, and a variety of after-school activities.

Currently, we operate after-school programs at Gvanim school and Keshet school, from the minute the school day is over until 6 p.m. The after-school programs are for 1st-3rd grade. Each after-school program has 15-20 children and two staff members.

Alongside the after-school programs, each school has an educational center for 4th grade and up, focusing more on the educational aspect and offering various after-school activities.



**240** children in after-school programs

**960** family members accompanied by the organization

Over **40** instructors and coordinators



**15** after-school activities

A complimentary staff of **65** pre-military volunteers, high schoolers, and other volunteers from the community

# WELFARE AND THERAPY PROGRAM

As part of Elifelet's welfare and therapy work, children are provided with emotional support by students from various fields of therapy and professional volunteers.

The treatments are done in the morning at school or in the afternoon as part of the after-school programs, as well as at municipal kindergartens that the children go to.

A social worker provided by Elifelet takes care of the families' welfare needs and is in ongoing touch with the school counselors, Mesila, and welfare offices to report any irregular situations and resolve them.

A few times a month, a therapy committee gathers to discuss holistic solutions for complex cases. The committee comprises the Head of the therapy program, the program's social worker, school counselors, the children's homeroom teacher, and staff members of the relevant after-school program, to create a full picture of the needs and provide precise solutions.

This intense work requires providing staff in the field with close guidance. Staff members meet with therapists for ongoing assistance in processing their experiences, instruction, and professional training.

153 children received therapy	Psychological-developmental counseling	Bibliotherapy	Emotional support
	Occupational therapy	Dance therapy	Sand tray therapy
75 therapy hours per week	Mental therapy for preschoolers	Anthroposophical crafts	Medical clowning
	Dog-assisted therapy	Art therapy	Speech therapy
23 staff members and volunteers			
Comprehensive assistance to 15 families	Providing psycho-didactic diagnosis, accompanying family members to complex dental procedures as well as other medical appointments, and assisting them with paying debts to children's medical insurance.		

## HUMANITARIAN PROGRAM

After the first year of Covid, where our humanitarian program was at the center of the organization's activity, in 2021 the program went back to assisting the most poverty-stricken families. Thanks to the program, we were able to assist dozens of families this year with food, diapers, and baby formula, connect many families in need of equipment with suitable donors, and accompany families suffering from health issues through the entangled bureaucracy of the healthcare system.

Alongside other organizations, we spent months helping families receive assistance grants according to criteria dictated by the Ministry of Finance. The grants were a true lifeline amid a humanitarian crisis suffered by statusless families.



Over **1,200** food packages were handed out to approx. **100** families



**35** of the families received additional help with diapers and baby formula

**10** kindergartens received weekly deliveries of dry food and fresh produce



Weekly assistance to **1** assisted-living apartment for people with emotional disabilities

Managing and coordinating the distribution of food coupons to approx. **500** families

Assisting submitting applications to the Administrator-General on behalf of **18** families

**15** dedicated volunteers assisting regularly with food packaging and distribution



# COMMUNITY HOUSE

**Beit Hakehilot (The Community House) was conceived by Elifelet as a way to promote collaborations between organizations working with the asylum seeking community.**

At a critical juncture where our offices stood empty due to Covid-19 lockdowns and the incitement against our activity was at its highest, we fully realized the importance of pooling resources, tightening collaboration, and creating a safe space for organizations.

In partnership with The Reality Fund, who owns the building, the project was able to come to life in a strategic location right across the street from two elementary schools for statusless children where Elifelet runs the afterschool program. The location allows the families easy access to a variety of much needed services all in one place.

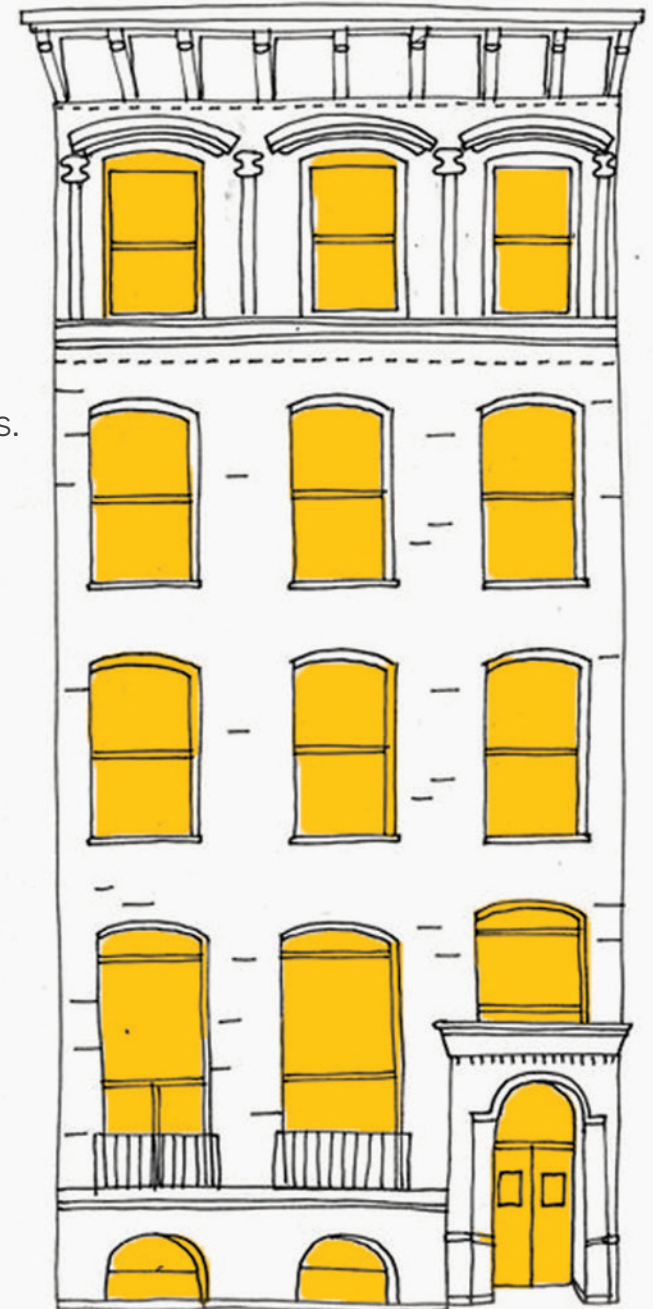
Currently sharing the Community House with Elifelet:

**The social food bank of Mesila and Lasova**, serving the families of the community

**ARDC – the African Refugee Development Center**, promoting education, financial integration, representation, and empowerment of rights among asylum seekers

And the **Hotline for Refugees and Migrants**, providing legal assistance and promoting human rights of work immigrants, refugees, and victims of human trafficking.

Further organizations will join the Community House in the upcoming future, and a second-hand shop will open in collaboration with and for the community





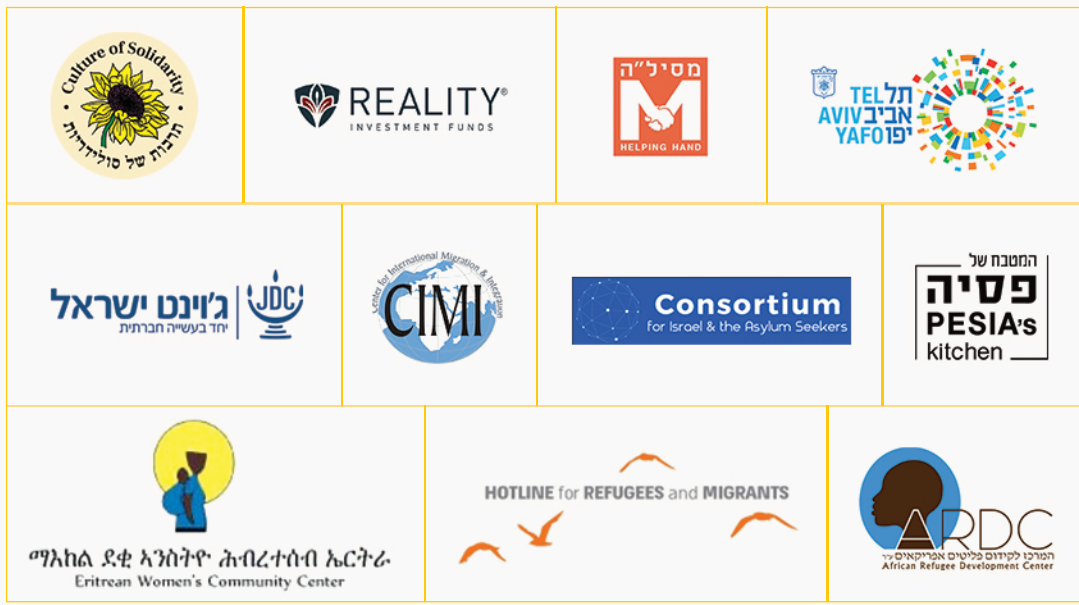


**THANK YOU!**

Elifelet's activity could not have been made possible without the support, contribution, and volunteering of the general public, sharing our belief that a better future can be created for statusless children. We and the children thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Elifelet is able to do its job thanks to the collaboration with numerous entities both inside and outside the asylum seekers community; organizations, groups, students, high schoolers, and various volunteers generously contributing their time and skills. **We'd like to thank our many partners, among whom:**

**We'd like to thank our many donors;** from philanthropic foundations to companies and private people, those mentioned here, and those who chose to remain anonymous – each contribution you make, regardless of size, directly affects the lives of the children.



We'd like to thank Ora Dankner for copy editing the report



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