

עלם ELEM

העמותה לנוער במצבי סיכון (ע"ר) youth in distress



ELEM Youth in distress

Impact report 2021

A few opening words

ELEM's vision

ELEM - Youth in Distress seeks to help vulnerable teens and young adults handle their situations, overcome risks and grow into citizens who contribute to themselves, to their communities and to Israel.

ELEM was established 39 years ago to assist youth in distress, from a sense of social responsibility and with the goal of improving and changing the situation of youth and young adults. Over the past year, ELEM's 285 staff members and 1,200 volunteers met 12,500 young people on the entire risk spectrum, in youth centers, on social media, in shelters and in accompaniment for independent living.

In March 2020, with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, all our lives changed. The closures, the quarantines, the disconnection from regular frameworks – all these led to worsening risk situations and distress among youth. However, we at ELEM continued to work on their behalf on all fronts, with the goal of providing the support and stability that are so lacking for them.

After two years of dealing with COVID-19 and the escalating security situation, life is slowly returning to normal, but we are witnessing an entire generation of children and youth who have been cast aside from the agenda, who are suffering from serious mental, emotional and social consequences.

Data we collected in the field in 2021 among teens and young adults served by ELEM indicates a two-fold increase in depression and anxiety, a two-fold and three-fold increase in violence at home, on the street and on the internet, a two-fold increase in eating disorders and a 1.5-fold increase in self-harm compared to 2019.

At ELEM, we will continue to work on behalf of these young people. To be there for them, see them, listen to them, assist them – and not leave any young person alone, without a response.

Dear partners, we are happy to share with you that ELEM's forward momentum continued in 2021. We expanded and deepened our work in identifying and

assisting youth at risk on social networks and in all activity areas; we established a new division for ELEM – work in the Arab community – that is operating two outreach vans and two centers for young women; we opened a new drop-in center in Nahariya; we expanded the 24/7 response in our shelters; we opened the first center dedicated to boys who have experienced sexual abuse; we began a unique project to assist young mothers at risk and more.

We view our close and fruitful partnership with the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services as vitally important. This partnership deepened during the pandemic crisis, and we thank the Ministry for their significant partnership and support. We also thank the Ministries of Education, Absorption, Health, and other government ministries for their support.

Cooperation with the business sector is vital and important to our activities and highlights the importance of mutual responsibility for creating a more equal society that cares for its weakest members. We are grateful to the corporations, donors and partners for their giving and involvement over the years and for the rapid mobilization of emergency funds during the pandemic.

We thank with all our hearts the staff and volunteers who give of themselves with dedication and commitment around the clock. During the pandemic, during the lockdowns, in wartime and during routine times – in every situation they are there for the young people, reaching out their hands and providing strength and hope for a better future.

In this annual report, presented to the honorable President, Mr. Isaac Herzog, you will find prominent phenomena and major trends in the lives of teens and young adults in distress in Israel, as well as ELEM's activities in 2021.

Yours in friendship



Shlomo Yanai
Chair



Nava Barak
President



Dana Avraham
CEO

About ELEM

Risks facing youth in Israel



70%

Normative teens
Typical challenges of adolescence



15%

Slight risk
Difficulties, depression, alcohol and drugs



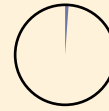
10%

Substantive risk
Attrition, depression, suicidality, alcohol and drugs



4%

High risk
Dissociation, vagrancy, criminality, alcohol and drugs



1%

Life-threatening risk
Homelessness, cycle of prostitution, detachment from family, friends

More than 800,000 youth aged 12-18 live in Israel. One quarter of them live in various situations of risk. In 2021, ELEM staff and volunteers met 12,500 youth and young adults, for whom the organization is a true place to turn. From a sense of social responsibility, ELEM provides them assistance with the goal of improving and changing their situations.

ELEM meets teens and young adults and assists them on the street, in youth centers, on social media, in shelters and in accompaniment for independent living. ELEM teams meet youth who are coping with a wide spectrum of distress, from personal crises typical of adolescence to more complex distress at the extreme of the risk spectrum: depression; anxiety; violence at home, on the street or on the internet; sexual abuse; mental health crises; eating disorders; suicidality; drug and alcohol use; dropping out of frameworks; involvement in prostitution; runaways and homelessness; and a variety of other phenomena. ELEM has developed expertise in identifying the distress that characterizes these teens and young adults in Israel and in developing and operating appropriate responses for coping with these phenomena. ELEM teams work "at eye level" with a non-judgmental approach, through relating to the unique needs of different population groups. ELEM currently operates 92 different projects in 42 cities and towns throughout Israel.

Over the past two years, in the shadow of the pandemic, distress among youth in Israel has worsened and become more extreme, and ELEM has continued to reach every place in which vulnerable youth are found, to identify these youth and to assist them, in regular times and emergencies, so that no young person remains alone.

The organization's 285 professionals work on the front lines in counseling and treatment, alongside 1,200 dedicated volunteers. ELEM's staff and volunteers go out into the field and meet youth where they are: on the street; in parks; at intersections; on social media; in the community; in schools; in discreet apartments; in hangout spots; at parties and more.

משרד העבודה הרווחה
והשירותים החברתיים
חוסן חברתי לישראל



ELEM works in cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare, including during the pandemic period. Many ELEM projects are conducted in cooperation with government ministries, local authorities and philanthropic bodies.

ELEM by the numbers - 2021



12,500

youth served per year



1,200

volunteers



285

staff members



92

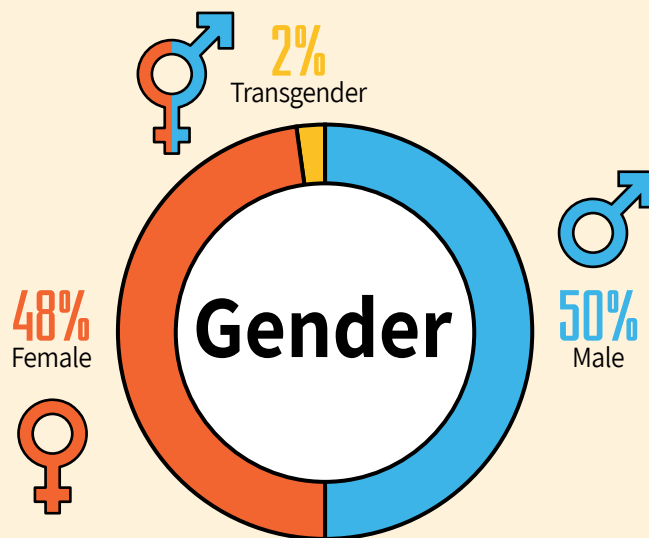
projects



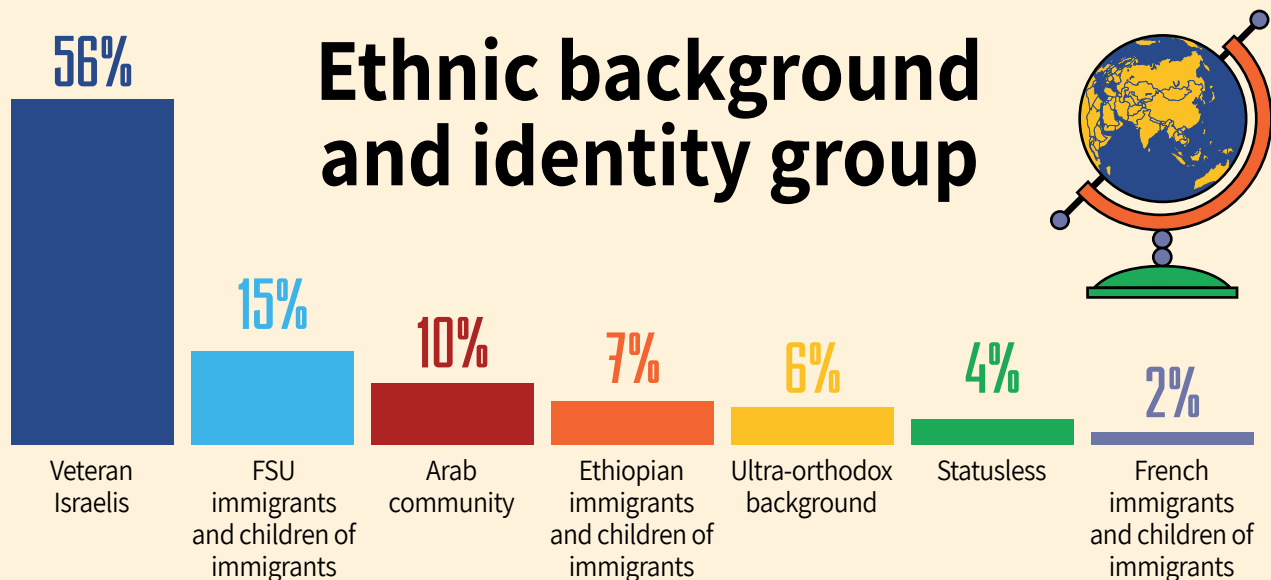
42

cities and towns

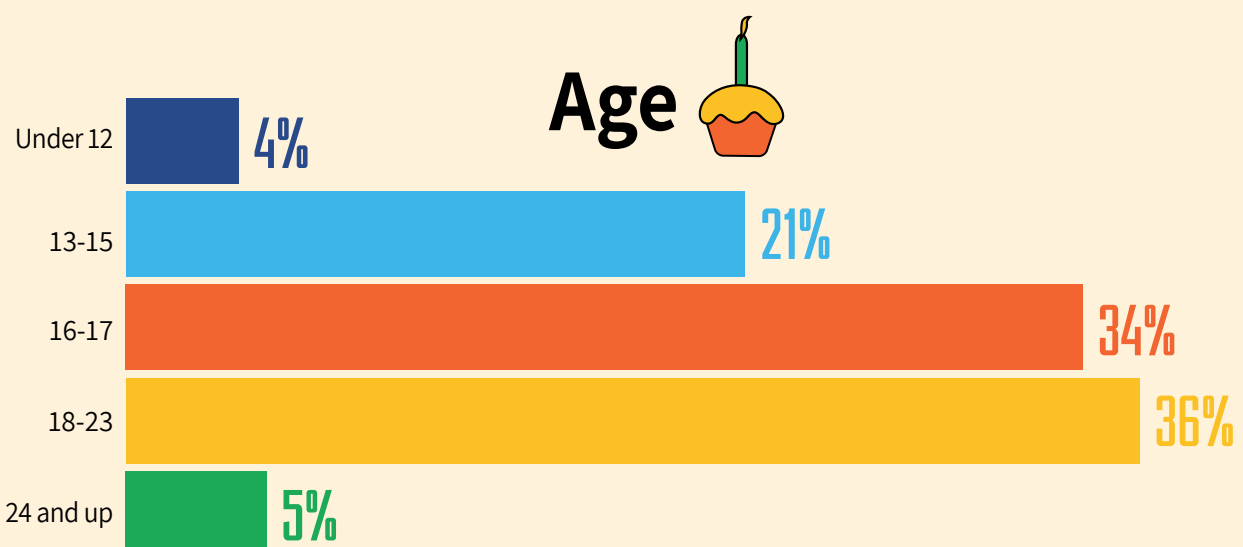
ELEM by the numbers



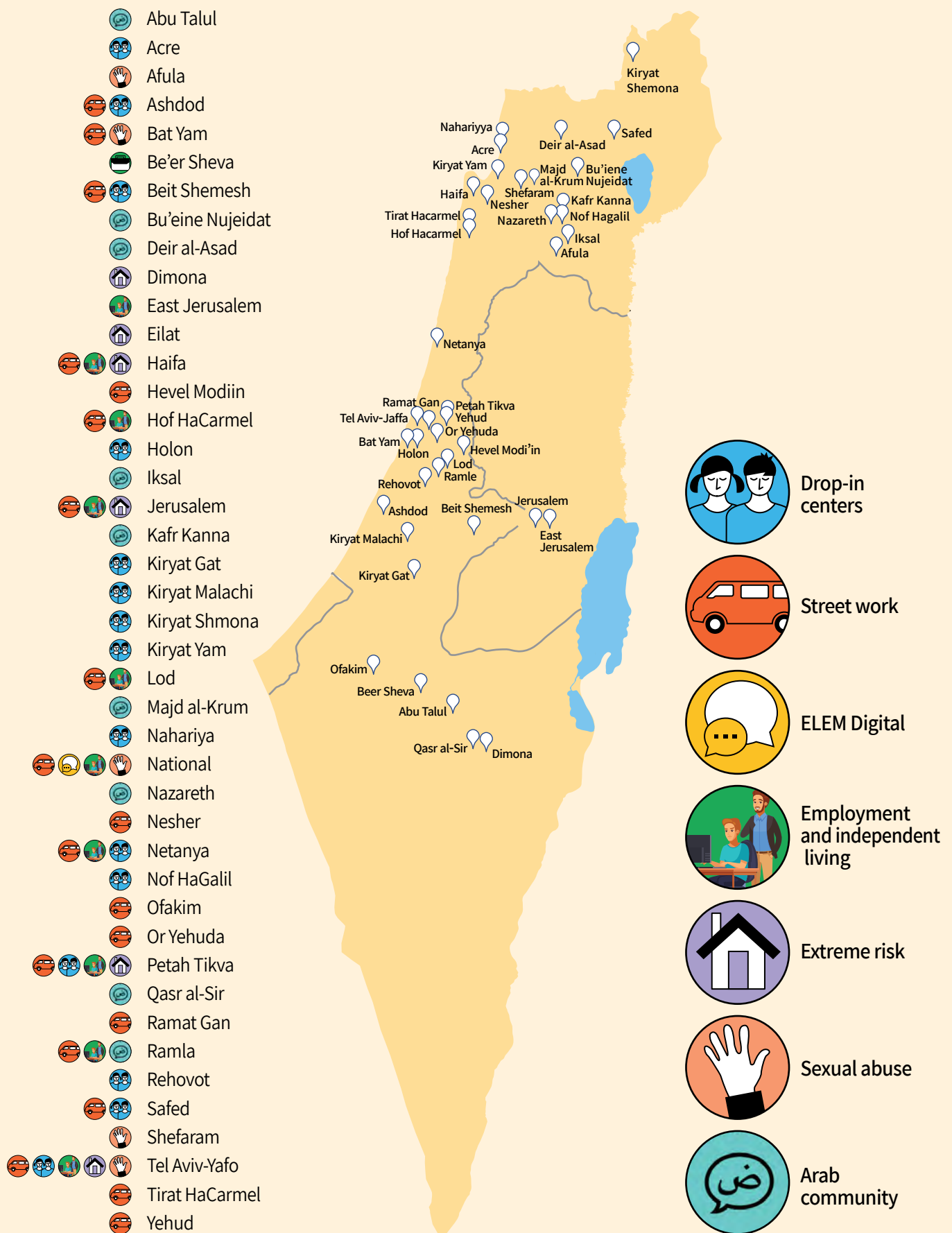
Street work



*This division includes overlapping categories



National deployment



Key phenomena in 2021



“We are the children of COVID-19, we shouldn’t know...
We grew up, we shared a situation now of depression,
fear, anxiety.
We also wanted to grow up, to flourish, like in regular years.
Friends – and not just masks, or days and nights of isolation.
Therefore, we will request and not just say, we paid the price.
Those years we lost, we cannot get them back.
But a smile of faith and strength, friendship, future and hope,
We can restore through dedication, caring, therapy, love!”

(From a poem written by Ephraim Sidon, from ELEM’s campaign, a rewrite of “The Children of Winter ’73” by Shmuel Hasfari)

This is the cry of the youth, among the most significant victims of the COVID-19 crisis. In March 2020, everything changed drastically. With the outbreak of the pandemic, with the initial waves of infection and lockdowns, we were exposed at ELEM to the impact of the pandemic on the mental health situation of youth – isolation, anxiety and depression, increased violence at home and on the street, runaways and increased use of drugs and alcohol. Youth were crying out for help!

In the data we collected, we see a two-fold increase in depression and anxiety, a two to three-fold increase in violence at home, on the street and on the internet, double the number of eating disorders and a 1.5-fold increase in self-harm among youth in comparison to 2019.

This is long-term damage, the result of two years without stable frameworks and without social life. Youth, who during the pandemic transitioned to communication almost exclusively on screens, have lost the ability to form face-to-face interpersonal relationships, and the ability to show empathy.

Despite the pandemic’s limitations, ELEM staff and volunteers continued to work in all arenas in order to provide youth with a stable framework and accessible connections. Youth who had not suffered from difficulties in the past turned to us for assistance and risk became present in nearly every home in Israel. Simultaneously, the situation of youth at risk who suffer from distress during regular times became even more extreme.

More than two years have passed since COVID-19 entered our lives, but over the past year we have witnessed the long-term consequences of the pandemic. Between the war abroad and the security situation in Israel, a generation of children and youth who are suffering from serious mental and emotional consequences have been pushed off the public agenda,

In the data we collected over the past year, we saw

a significant jump in the number of phenomena and risk situations faced by teens and young adults who turned to ELEM for support and assistance.

The situation of youth at risk, who suffer from distress during regular times, became more extreme and worsened during the past two years due to lockdowns, quarantines and transition to online learning both by schools and by informal education frameworks. Youth who lived in dysfunctional homes or who lacked a framework prior to the pandemic, faced a decline in their mental health. One of the girls told us at that time: “Dying of COVID is dangerous and frightening, but children like us can die from staying at home.”

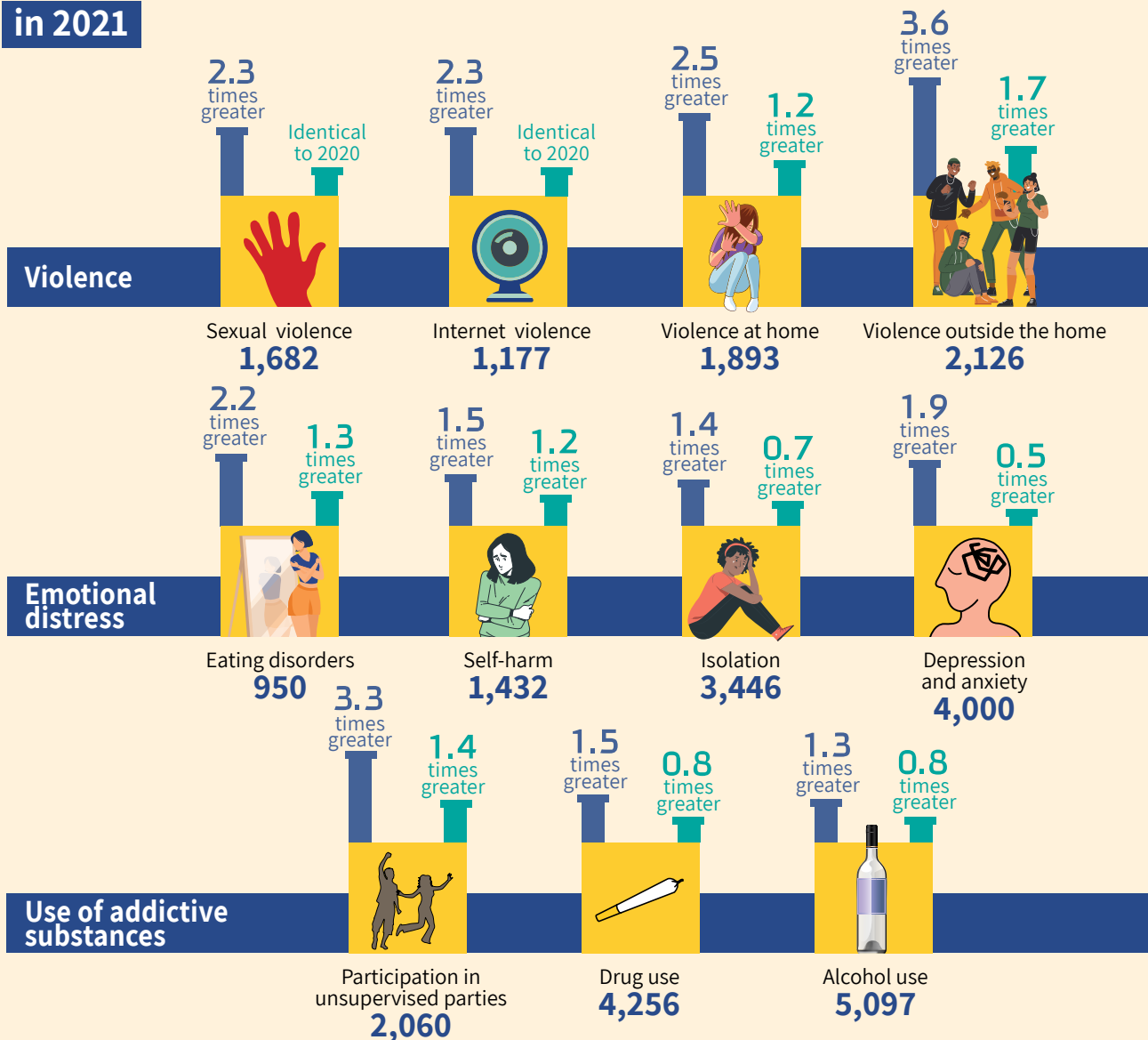
The COVID-19 pandemic is indeed disappearing from our daily lives, but today, two years after the initial outbreak, we are witnessing its ongoing damage. The isolation, disconnection and lack of stability became more difficult in the absence of a stable framework throughout such a long period. Teens, who have transitioned to communicating almost exclusively through screens, have lost their ability to form interpersonal connections, face to face, with their peers, and in addition, they lacked significant adults who see them.

The escalation in the security situation, which reached its peak in Operation Guardians of the Walls in May 2021, and the increasing tensions on the streets between different sectors of society, brought to light conflicts that highlight the difficulties experienced by youth on the margins of society. The margins became more complex and the encounter between different marginal populations became more complex and extreme.

As a result of the factors listed here, we saw an increase in reports among youth we assist of violence on the streets (3.6 times higher in 2021 than in 2019, before the pandemic), violence at home (2.5 times higher), violence on the internet (2.3 times higher), depression

Key phenomena among teens and young adults served by ELEM in 2021

■ In comparison to 2020
■ In comparison to 2019



and anxiety (2 times higher), use of drugs and alcohol (1.3 times higher), eating disorders (2.2 times higher), and self-harm (1.5 times higher).

In the past year, we have witnessed further extremes in these phenomena. **Not only are there more reports of these phenomena – the phenomena have intensified.**

Thus, for example, the level of violence on the streets among youth has increased significantly; there are many incidents of more extreme and more dangerous violence than in the past. On the streets there is a constant increase in the rates of attacks, vandalism and cruelty. We are experiencing a loss of all restraint.

This year we are also seeing extremism and worsening in eating disorders and negative body image. Presumably the source of the extremism is the many hours that teen boys and girls saw themselves on camera on Zoom during lessons, and the increase in time spent on social networks, while absorbing the world of the dominant images there, according to which success is measured in beauty, wealth and thinness.

We at ELEM will continue to work on behalf of these

youth. To be there for them, see them, listen to them, guide and mediate for them and assist them. **We will not leave any young person to cope alone.**

The long-term emotional and mental-health consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the exacerbation of all kinds of distress have led to a need to deepen the quality and time dedicated to listening, support, assistance and treatment provided by ELEM teams to each and every adolescent – which requires increased resources for more intensive professional training.

The damage caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is enormous and it is our obligation as a society to work together to support all our children! To see youth, to take an interest in them, to support and care for them, to provide tools, to set boundaries and to strengthen formal and informal support, as parents, as educators, and in an inclusive way as a society. Only through the integration and cooperation of the education, health and welfare systems, only through joining forces, can we provide youth with the best possible response.

Street work

National director: Roy Homri

4,433*

Total teens and young adults served

Street work at ELEM is comprised of identification and intervention teams that reach youth where they are (on the street, on social networks, in parks, at intersections, in hangout spots and more). The teams make meaningful connections with the teens “at eye level,” build trust, act as liaisons, refer to necessary treatment agencies and conduct emergency crisis interventions. The unique encounter between staff and volunteers and youth who wander the streets and the internet can create meaningful change in these teens’ lives, it exposes them to alternative world views, approaches and thoughts, which makes it possible for them to begin to dream, to aspire and to discover. In addition, street work helps youth gain access to services that can assist them in coping with their distress.

Outreach vans operate in **24** cities and towns among diverse populations throughout the country: in urban and rural spaces; in Jewish and Arab society; among secular and religious communities; among immigrants and veteran Israelis; in the periphery and in metropolitan cities.

Consequences of the pandemic and key phenomena in street work

The COVID-19 pandemic clearly made its mark in the area of street work. There was a drastic decrease in the age of teens who came to meet the outreach van teams, alongside extreme changes in the work routine, since some of the regular locations where the outreach vans operate emptied out, while others practically doubled in scope.

Simultaneously, the pandemic with all its guidelines and restrictions from official entities eroded the ability of young people to trust the adult world. These trends also continue to make their mark in the difficulty many young people are experiencing creating new connections with their peers.

The pandemic period also brought a significant increase in the level of violence on the streets, with reports of increases in incidents of serious violence and aggression, in which many more youth were involved than in the past. Over the past year, many teens began carrying knives and cold weapons. In addition, the

outreach van teams reported a significant increase this year in reports of depression, mental health disorders and use of mind-altering substances (drugs and alcohol), alongside an increase in reports about teens staying in lofts, hangout spaces and abandoned buildings. There was a drastic increase in data on teens dropping out of educational frameworks, especially those who had difficulty learning before the pandemic and did not return to the classroom when schools reopened.

During the pandemic, the arena that has taken up increasingly greater space in the lives of teens is online social networks. The internet has become the “new street,” and many of teens’ social activities take place there, which means that young people are found less on the street and more on the internet, where they are also exposed to various dangers. For this reason, we made a decision to increase the activities of the street work teams on the internet, with an emphasis on processes for identifying and connecting with youth at risk on the internet, mainly among teen girls at risk.

Other major events that impacted ELEM’s street work in 2021:

- The Meron disaster – During the Lag B’Omer events in Meron, as in every year, the street work division set up an onsite space designed to reduce emotional and mental health harm among teens and young adults taking part in the ceremonies. As the disaster began to unfold, ELEM teams on site began to assist with treating the wounded, directing the crowds, and providing emotional and mental health first aid to process the trauma in the field. In the weeks following the disaster, we accompanied the teens and young adults and the field teams who continued to cope with the mental health consequences of the event.
- Operation Guardians of the Walls – During the operation and afterwards, we experienced violent acts by youth and young adults served by ELEM outreach vans in a number of mixed cities. ELEM teams worked to reduce tensions and to calm youth during the operation and in the period that followed.



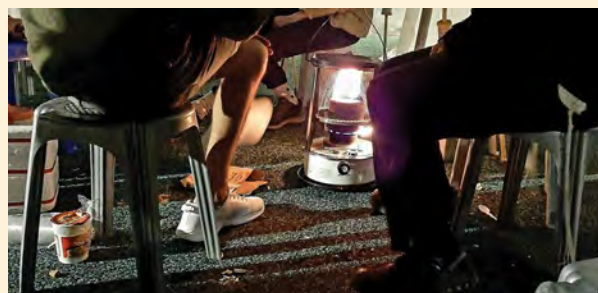
* Not including one-time identifications

Key achievements in 2021

- During the past year, we expanded and deepened our work in identifying youth at risk on social networks, with 5 dedicated teams that conduct identification work and interventions online.
- We initiated the first outreach vans in the Arab community. Currently there are new outreach vans in 5 Arab towns, as part of a joint effort with ELEM's Arab community division.
- With the conclusion of the Ateret Tiferet project, a unique project that accompanies young Haredi women, the model was adopted by 3 local authorities.
- Operation of 60 nights of outreach van activities in 47 local authorities through the Welfare Ministry's "We see you" project, a project with several organizational partners.
- Acquisition of 15 new outreach vans.
- ELEM's Good People project, which assists young people who experience mental and emotional distress after using mind-altering substances during raves, took part this year in an inter-ministry professional committee which regulated the work necessary to minimize harm among those who attend these outdoor parties. The committee is a cooperative effort of the Ministries of Education, Welfare, and Internal Security.

"
**I was very suicidal, I was depressed.
Without ELEM, without the outreach
van, without this weekly talk, I don't
think I would still be here.** "

D., a teen girl at an ELEM outreach van



Drop-in centers

National director: Keren Naor

2,089

Total teens and young adults served

ELEM's drop-in centers are dispersed in different cities nationwide and operate throughout the week in the afternoon and evening hours. The spaces provide youth with a safe place to make healthy connections with their peers and with at least one significant adult. In addition, the drop-in centers provide support, assistance and help for diverse kinds of distress and difficulties.

Teen boys and girls who choose to come to one of the drop-in centers enjoy a variety of empowering activities, individual and group conversations, acceptance and a sense of belonging and connection. They also receive tools for coping with risk situations, emotional crises and adolescent experiences.

There are **16** drop-in centers throughout the country. Some are multicultural centers, geared toward teens from immigrant families. The drop-in centers division also operates **7** social-emotional spaces in schools in different cities.

Consequences of the pandemic and key phenomena at the drop-in centers

The impact of the pandemic on the activities of the drop-in centers was felt not only in the increase in the scope of distress but also in their frequency, in a decrease in the age of youth experiencing risk phenomena, and in their intensity and severity. At the end of each lockdown, we saw that teens who in the past were not considered at risk exhibited risky symptoms and displayed difficulty in returning to routine and to formal frameworks. From one lockdown to the next, the scope of youth at risk increased. Youth who in the past were defined as being at low to medium risk deteriorated to serious situations that characterize extreme risk.

Over the past year a significant increase has been felt in the number and severity of incidents of physical violence among youth at the centers, alongside vandalism and wandering the streets. We witnessed an increase in the number of criminal acts and encounters with the police, who had to deal with youth carrying sticks, pepper spray and spikes, with thefts, drug use and more.

In addition, we found that there was an increase in

the scope of teen boys and girls in the centers who experienced mental health crises and suffered from eating disorders and dealing with food and body image. Many teen boys and girls spoke about isolation and boredom throughout the day, and some of them did not return to school regularly. In some of the centers over the past year there were discussions about death and suicide that impacted the atmosphere and aroused vigilance among the staff and volunteers.

We also saw an alarming increase in the centers in reports of sexual abuse at home and in the community and of course every instance was dealt with according to the circumstances.

In the past year, we saw a decrease in the age of the teen boys and girls visiting the youth centers, which testifies to the expansion of the scope of distress among youth more than in previous years. If in the past the lowest threshold was 14-15, over the past year a wave of teens aged 11-12 sought support at the centers and received accompaniment and treatment.



Key achievements in 2021

- Strengthening identification of youth at risk on the streets – activity that intensified over the past year in the shadow of the pandemic. Currently **8** of the youth centers conduct outreach on the street to identify at risk youth.
- **7** centers successfully operating around the country to provide a social-emotional response within schools. The program operates in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the local authorities and was expanded this year with the goal of preventing students from dropping out of school.
- Opening **3** new drop-in centers! This year a new youth center was opened in Nahariya, supported by municipal entities, thanks to broad infrastructure work with the local authority and partners. In addition, 2 more new youth centers will be opening soon in Beit Shemesh, a center for teen girls and a center for teen boys, part of initiating work with the ultra-Orthodox community.
- Opening innovative groups and models: 1) Establishing a group of alumni of the Safed youth center slated to raise and assist with issues related to the world of alumni (employment, emotional issues and more). 2) Opening an innovative group model in Merom Galil that provides social-emotional space in a rural setting. 3) Opening a learning center at the Holon drop-in center for studying Hebrew and closing educational gaps in cooperation with Beit HaOleh.
- During Operation Guardians of the Walls, ELEM teams in mixed cities, which suffered from a severe escalation in the security situation, operated around the clock to locate all their youth constituents, to care for their physical and emotional wellbeing and mainly to be there for them during this difficult and unstable period. A year has passed since then, but the teams are continuing intensive work, counseling and support on issues related to violence prevention, identity-based conflict, multiculturalism and more.

“During the pandemic I felt that I needed to pick up the shards, now I need to pick up the smithereens ”

G., age 16, teenage girl served by one of ELEM's drop-in centers



Extreme risk

National director: Maya Baron

822

Total teens and young adults served

The Extreme Risk division at ELEM provides a response for teens and young adults who are at the extreme end of the risk spectrum. Most of them are excluded from society and survive through prostitution, homelessness, criminal activity, addiction and other extremely precarious situations. Likewise, most of them suffer from complex post-trauma due to abuse, neglect and violence they suffered in childhood and even in the present. Extreme risk centers serve as a home for them, a protective space that responds to their basic needs and enables them to rest from the street and from various extreme situations. To breathe, to eat, sometimes to get regular sleep – and in a gradual process to begin to rehabilitate their lives.

Extreme risk teams assist teens and young adults in these situations to receive emergency first response to reduce harm – shelter, clothing and a hot meal, creating positive connections (which is especially meaningful for these young people, most of whom have never felt that they have anyone to rely on in the world, or that there is anyone who cares about their well-being), access to benefits to which they are entitled, assistance and guidance regarding employment options and assistance with finding optimal safe housing without conditions, judgment or desire to change them. All this is done with the understanding that this is a personal and long-term process that requires restoring faith in the system and creating a positive connection at a pace and in a manner dictated by the young person themselves.

The extreme risk division currently operates 8 centers around the country, 7 of them in cooperation and with funding from the Welfare Ministry and the local authorities. Some operate 24/7 and some offer shelter on certain days of the week.



Consequences of the pandemic and key phenomena in ELEM's extreme risk work

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdowns, there was a severe feeling of helplessness among the youth at extreme risk. The street where they lived or hung out prior to the pandemic became the last place that they could be, while the guidelines to stay at home were not appropriate for those for whom having a home at all is not self-evident.

During the first lockdown, we saw a slight decrease in prostitution, which came from the young people's desire to protect their health, but in parallel we saw increased incidence of depression, anxiety and self-harm (some especially severe) among youth at extreme risk. Those who did stay at home reported an increase in incidents of violence, sexual abuse, eating disorders and other distresses that are symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from childhood, combined with the distresses raised by the pandemic.

This year we saw new phenomena among youth at extreme risk. Sexual exploitation through the internet expanded with an increase in the activities on social networks during the pandemic period, and the scope of new sites for sexual exploitation on the internet accelerated, such as apps for groups that can be joined, through sending nude photos/videos or apps that limit views of personal photos and content for a fee, and distribution of sex videos on the internet. All these naturally increased the work to identify sexual exploitation on the internet by ELEM's extreme risk teams.

Key achievements in 2021

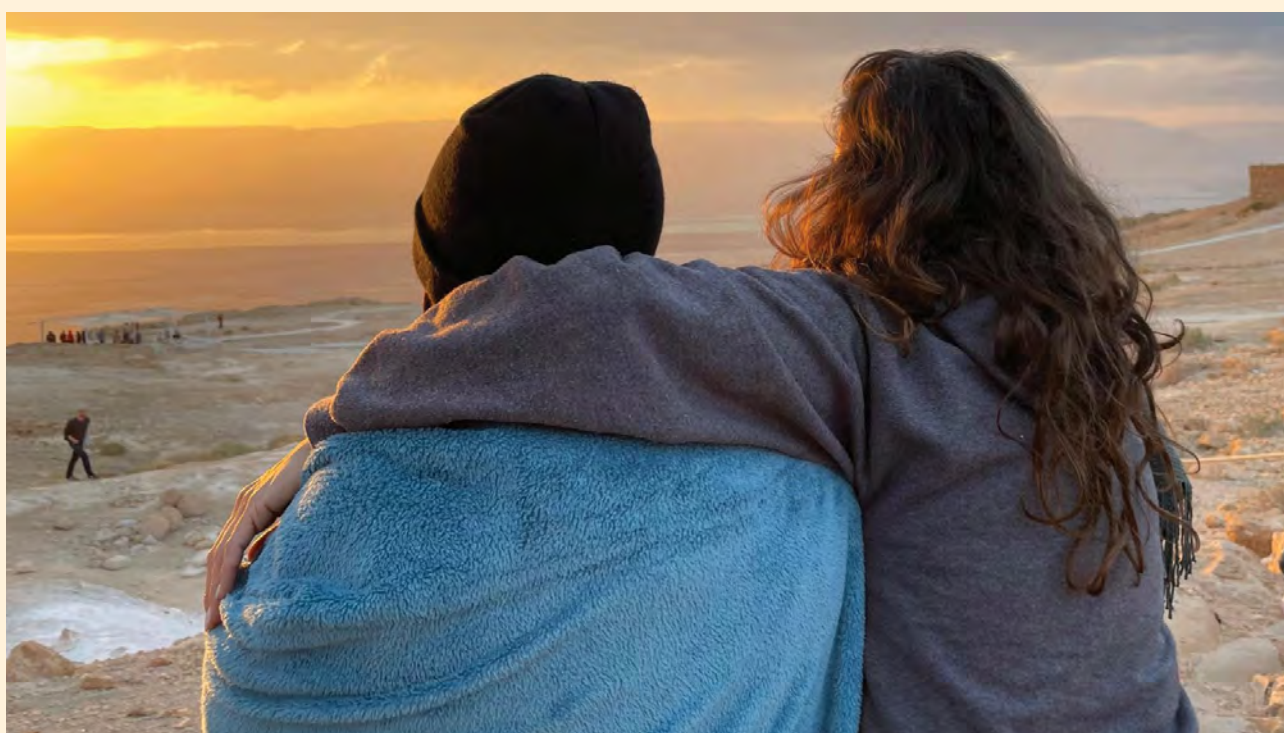
- Transition to a 24/7 response in treatment centers for sexually exploited youth in Haifa and in Petach Tikva, with the goal of providing a broad scope shelter solution for sexually exploited young people, beginning during the COVID-19 lockdowns. This required doubling the number of employees in these centers.
- Establishing neWish, an employment project operated by young women from the Alma project. neWish is an online store for secondhand baby clothes and the operation by Alma enables young women to develop, support and empower themselves as independent, working women making a positive contribution to the society.
- Opening the new.story project in cooperation with the Real Home project for automatic identification on the internet of young men and women who have suffered sexual abuse at home, based on digital footprints. The project includes 9 staff members from the field of data.
- The Halev Eilat project transitioned to working 5 days a week, including accompaniment by graduates of the program for young mothers.
- Staff, volunteers and young people in the field continued to take an active part in Knesset committees, to advance innovative public programs and to participate in roundtables, coalitions of organizations in the fight against commercial prostitution and more.



“

I arrived at ELEM as a teen girl whose entire life revolved around lies, fear and defensiveness. I came through the doorway and immediately they accepted me with a smile from ear to ear, with eyes full of expectation to get to know me and to love me. Me, a girl who had been thrown out of and dropped out of every possible framework. ”

L., young woman at Halev 24/7



3,065

Total teens and young adults served

ELEM Digital is the organization's response for youth at risk on social networks, which provides anonymous mental health assistance and support on the internet to teens and young adults in distress through:

- Making contact, identification, mediation and providing intervention responses for youth at risk on social networks.
- Developing creative ideas that support the promotion of digital innovation, and thus developing capacity to provide new responses for youth at risk in the virtual space.

The different interfaces for ELEM on social networks include:

- Chat at the www.yelem.org.il site and recently also on WhatsApp
- Proactive identification on the internet through advanced technology for monitoring and locating youth in distress on social networks and intervention and assistance as needed
- Pages and messenger on Instagram www.instagram.com/nayedet.digital and on Facebook www.facebook.com/elemdigital
- "Fireflies" – a closed Facebook group for teen girls
- Response on group forums and personal emails.

In addition, the ELEM Digital division deals with supporting and implementing digital transformation in the organization's information systems.

Consequences of the pandemic and key phenomena in ELEM Digital

Alongside the familiar content of adolescence along the spectrum of crises and coping, it is evident that social distancing due to the pandemic led to an increase among youth treated by ELEM Digital, in which the focus of appeals for assistance was the sense of isolation, depression, anxiety and social anxiety. In all the spaces in which ELEM operates online, the conversation included coping with violence at home, family difficulties and a very large sense of isolation in coping with the personal crises that these teens and young adults were facing.

Preoccupation with external appearance and with weight, alongside an increase in eating disorders among

adolescents, were also evident to ELEM Digital on the internet, mainly in identification work where many posts were located on this topic, leading to intervention and assistance by professionals in the field. We saw that the difficulties adolescents faced in coping with others looking at them, mainly during periods of distance learning and the demand to learn through Zoom, led to increasing levels of self-criticism, social difficulties and eating disorders among adolescents.

Other issues that arose this year in dialogue with youth on social media were the need for personal, private space, difficulties with the lack of privacy at home and exposure to family issues that they had not been exposed to before the pandemic (economic uncertainty, difficult relationships between parents and more).

An anxiety that arose in discussions on the internet revolved around the social sphere, in which teens expressed concern over diminishing and lacking social skills and tools, alongside a fear of reentering the real world. Accordingly, we have seen some teens over the past year avoiding the outside world, shutting themselves at home, and having difficulty leaving the house and initiating social encounters – even after the lockdowns ended and it was ostensibly possible to return to regular routines.

Key achievements in 2021

- In 2021, the number of adolescents identified on social networks increased, with 1,700 identifications on the internet made by ELEM Digital.
- 3,065 teens and young adults turned to ELEM chat for support, assistance and guidance.
- With the need for inclusive space, especially during the pandemic, there was a 17% increase in the number of teen girls and young women in the closed "Fireflies" Facebook group, which provides a space for dialogue about issues they face as adolescent girls.
- In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences for youth, the ELEM Digital team conducted 14 internal and external courses and training on the topic of working on the internet, identification, location, and intervention.
- In the past year, ELEM Digital convened a forum of ELEM staff and outside organizations to identify and support youth at risk on the internet.

"In one of the Tanach lessons on Zoom, I saw myself and I was disgusted. Since then I don't participate in classes with my camera on. I keep getting marked absent, but I don't care, no one is going to see me like that anymore. Fat, cow.

S., a teen girl in ELEM Digital

"

Arab community

National director: Khalil Homeidi

214

Total teens and young adults served

In 2021, a new division was born at ELEM! The division for work in the Arab community was established this year with the goal of expanding and improving the organization's responses among teens and young adults in the Arab community.

The Arab community division operates on two main plains:

1. Establishing and expanding new responses for vulnerable youth in the Arab community
2. Accompanying existing programs within ELEM that provide services in the Arab community

In addition, the Arab community division at ELEM is responsible for formulating culturally appropriate methodologies and promoting policy change in the area of at-risk youth in the Arab community, through developing and establishing multisectoral partnerships.

Key achievements in 2021

- Initiating street outreach work in 5 Arab towns in the north of Israel, with a plan for further expansion in the coming year.
- Establishing two "Nur" centers for teen girls and young women in Arab towns – Ramle and Majd al-Krum.
- As part of the Welfare Ministry's "We see you" project, a collaborative effort of ELEM's street work division



and a number of other organizations, ELEM led activities in 14 Arab towns in the north of the country, in central Israel and in East Jerusalem.

- With the inauguration of the Arab community division, we at ELEM built professional leadership for the division, and we initiated a forum of civil society organizations on the topic of youth at risk in Arab society.



Employment and independent living

1,106

Total teens and young adults served

ELEM's division of employment and independent living works to provide teens and young adults at risk with tools and skills for managing independent lives. These young people are mainly cut off from family, social and therapeutic support systems, and most of them are forced to survive in the world without resources. ELEM provides support for them in their early adult life, as they gain experience finding employment, developing skills for independent living, accessing benefits, finding community, dealing with health issues, enlisting in military or national service, learning opportunities and more.

The employment division is comprised of a number of programs including:

- “From Dependence to Independence”: A counseling and personal accompaniment program for those graduating from youth authority residential programs, who have been living in frameworks outside the home and are required to cope with the challenges of leaving for independent living. They receive tools and skills for building independent lives in a framework of personal accompaniment over a two-year period. The program operates in cooperation with the Ministry of Welfare.
- The “young mothers” project provides a continuum of responses and services for young mothers at risk, with the goal of assisting them in integrating into society and reducing situations of exclusion and neglect of the young women and their children.
- The “activist communities” program: For young people aged 18-30, alumni of ELEM or young adults with similar profiles, who want to change the reality of their lives and impact society, through acquiring skills and tools for activism.
- The “ELEM Financial” project: Conducted in cooperation with Bank Hapoalim. In this program, teens and young adults at risk receive guidance from volunteers for optimal economic and financial management.
- The “Ma'atefet” program: Accompanies young adults at risk who choose to volunteer for national service (sherut leumi).
- Employment promotion projects: Our “Partners on the way” and “Onsite training” programs, in cooperation with Bank Hapoalim and the business sector, integrate at-risk youth into the employment world. In these programs, vulnerable young men and women receive professional training within

businesses and real opportunities to integrate into the business and the field.

Consequences of the pandemic and key phenomena in ELEM's employment and independent living program

In 2021, there was an increase in the number of cases in which we assisted young adults from the employment projects in coping with situations of depression, anxiety, stress, isolation, social distancing, lack of stable routine and economic stability. The pandemic and Operation Guardians of the Walls further worsened these phenomena. In addition, there was an increase in reports of self-harm, use of drugs and alcohol, incidents of violence in the family and increase post-traumatic symptoms that existed before the pandemic but worsened over the past two years.

The economic situation of young adults was severely affected following the COVID-19 crisis (and among young people in the Arab community it was even more severely affected). Some of their workplaces closed, the leave-without-pay model slowed their return to work, and many of the young people remained unemployed and got into debt. The fact that many of them lack economic and family backing was evident in their difficulty meeting basic payments. As a result, some of them were forced to return to dangerous survival strategies: returning to living in the streets; returning to commercial prostitution; connections with the gray market and more.

Among the young mothers we accompany, the pandemic deepened their challenges with poverty, and with integrating into the work force, and exacerbated family violence.

Among the young adults from the Arab community whom we accompany, great distress in the area of housing was felt. The lack of basic housing and the lack of family backing constitute a barrier to development in other areas of life such as employment, military service, education, and integration into the community. Some of them were forced to return home to the communities where they grew up, which is usually not an optimal environment.



National director: Tami Nahmias

Key achievements in 2021

- Developing a project to promote responses and policies for young mothers in risk situations. In the project, approximately **150** young mothers currently receive accompaniment and support. Simultaneously, we established an intersectoral coalition to promote policies to support young mothers, in which ELEM is currently positioned as the leading organization assisting young mothers at risk.
- **100** young men and women received accompaniment this year as part of expanding ELEM Financial, and the expanded program recruited an additional array of volunteers.
- The “Ma'atefet” program was expanded to additional populations – in the Arab community and in the ultra-Orthodox community.
- Currently more than **20** young women are members of ELEM's activist community, which gained momentum over the past year, developing and leading social initiatives run by young women in their communities including: a clothing donation project; a project providing personal hygiene products for young women living on the street; and a project to collect mobile phones for teens and young adults living on the street.



“ The accompaniment from Z. was really meaningful for me because the process that she and I went through taught me skills for life connected to financial management. I became more calculated with my money and more responsible. ”

T., a young woman who received accompaniment from ELEM Financial

Training department

National director: Khalil Homeidi

The training department is responsible for developing professional knowledge, training staff, conceptualizing organizational knowledge, and making it accessible to all organization staff.

The department is comprised of 8 clinical supervisors who provide clinical training to all the organization's projects with the goal of supporting the professional staff in their development and learning process and expanding and improving methodologies. In addition to clinical training provided to teams on a weekly

basis, the department assisted with providing professional development programs on many topics during the year, including clinical supervision skills, sexual abuse and group work. The department also worked on writing and conceptualizing the intervention model for ELEM staff in the different areas of work.

External training

National director: Khalil Homeidi

As an organization working for nearly 40 years with vulnerable teens and young adults, ELEM has a body of pioneering and cutting edge professional knowledge. Through unmediated encounters with a wide diversity of youth across the risk spectrum, in the streets, in the different centers and in therapeutic environments, ELEM's professional staff have developed deep familiarity with target populations as well as innovative and creative work methods.

ELEM provides professional training led by ELEM staff as well as by professionals in therapy and education, including social work, criminology, psychology, education and more, who have accumulated vast experience in work with teens and young people in situations of risk and distress. In this framework, ELEM

conducts training days, lectures, workshops, study days and seminars for social, academic, government bodies, study delegations and training, overseas and in Israel.

In 2021, ELEM provided approximately 200 hours of professional training to different organizations on a variety of topics including: identification of youth at risk on the street and on the internet; sexual abuse; working with minors in prostitution; multicultural work; intervention in informal spaces; use of mind-altering substances among youth and more.

Sexual abuse

National director: Amir Dloomy

699

Total teens and young adults served

The sexual abuse division at ELEM provides treatment for children and youth aged 5-18 who have survived sexual assault and those involved in inappropriate, harmful sexual behavior.

ELEM operates two treatment centers for sexual abuse by minors in cooperation with the Welfare Ministry, one in Tel Aviv (with branches in Bat Yam and Jaffa) and the second in Afula (with branches in Shefaram, Migdal Haemek and Yokneam). In addition, this year we opened the first treatment center of its kind for boys aged 13-18 who have been sexually abused, in Jerusalem. The centers offer individual therapy, parent counseling, family therapy and assessments. The treatment is conducted in accordance with the nature of the abuse and the ability to process trauma and in accordance with the age of the clients and their emotional world.

ELEM's group therapy program for teen boys who sexually abuse operates 30 therapy groups throughout the country, in cooperation with the probation service and the youth authority. The goal of the treatment, which lasts at least 1.5 years, is to help the boys lower their level of risk of re-offending, thus preventing additional victims and assisting the youth to integrate optimally in society.

Alongside these programs, ELEM holds courses and training for professionals on a variety of subjects related to sexual abuse for organizations, treatment institutions and government ministries.

Consequences of the pandemic and key phenomena in ELEM's sexual abuse division

Close to half of sexual abuse of minors happens in the family, inside the home. The COVID-19 crisis and the accompanying lockdowns forced children and youth to spend extended periods at home, sometimes with their abusers, without the capacity to maintain their physical and emotional safety. Over the course of the lockdowns, we saw an increase in abuse within the family, mainly between siblings, inside the home, during the lockdowns and in between them.

Alongside this, boys who sexually abused others and were in the midst of positive rehabilitation processes were under stress during the pandemic crisis, which

delayed their rehabilitation and worsened their situations. Some of them re-offended.

ELEM's ability to provide treatment, and mainly to succeed in doing so face to face, was harmed by the pandemic. The permanence of treatment relationships and their stability, which are so important for trauma treatment, were lacking for us and for the families in treatment. Despite this, the therapists providing treatment did everything possible to preserve stability and to insist on continuing treatment and did not give up on any of the youth. For this reason, very few children and youth dropped out of treatment.

Over the past year we were exposed to more incidents of sexual abuse that took place when a group of boys, usually older, severely sexually exploited a girl who was younger and weaker than them. Some of these incidents were publicized in the media and many of these youth came to us for treatment.

Likewise, over the past year we have been more exposed to sexual abuse of boys. An increase in public awareness and the awakening of social discourse about abuse of boys, teens and men, fostered an increase in requests for help from boys who have been abused at a younger age. We at ELEM are conscious of this increased awareness and have developed professional expertise on the subject. We established a dedicated center for treating boys who have been abused in Jerusalem and we aspire to lead change on this topic among professionals and among the broader public.

Another subject that came up again and again this year is the subject of sexual exploitation on the internet, with an increase in reports and in requests for treatment for sexual exploitation in the virtual space including: distribution of videos or photos of a sexual nature; photo editing; sending abusive sexual messages; photographing and distributing photographs of intimate areas; writing humiliating and sexist comments and more. These are all expressions of sexual violence on the internet that reached us this year. We are learning the field and professionalizing our approach to treatment accordingly.

Key achievements in 2021

- **2 new centers in the sexual abuse division!** Opening the first center in the country for boys who have experienced sexual abuse in Jerusalem and establishing a new center in south Tel Aviv. The center in Tel Aviv was opened just before the outbreak of the pandemic, but due to limitations and restrictions, only in the past year did this center make a lot of progress in developing treatment methods and professionalization and succeeded in reaching unique populations such as the refugee population in the south of the city.
- Establishing "Ohel Nechama (comfort tent)": An

activist project in cooperation with other organizations that provided a safe space for discussion around the topic of sexual abuse for 5 days in Jerusalem, which was visited by **more than 500** people. The project was formed with the goal of providing a response to the intense and difficult feelings that arose following multiple incidents of sexual abuse that were exposed in the Haredi community and in general. The project received a lot of buzz and responses of identification and support.

- Expansion of activities for populations that have used less of the existing services: **60** clients in the Haredi community (mainly in B'nei Brak), **50** clients in the Arab community (mainly in the north of the country), and **20** clients in the immigrant population (mainly in south Tel Aviv).
- The sexual abuse division is based on extensive clinical experience gained over the years, and this year was a groundbreaking year for bringing this expertise to many professionals within ELEM and outside, through courses and training.



“
The tent of mourning and comfort was very healing for me. It’s a place to go when you feel overwhelmed and to feel that there are other people who are going through similar things, to see that we are ok, that there is hope and it’s possible to be optimistic. ”

G., a young woman who came to Ohel Nechama

ELEM: Working for social change

In 2021, ELEM continued to work on legislation and policy change through integration of staff members and young adults from the organization in Knesset committees, roundtables and organizational coalitions including:

- The special committee for issues of addictions, drugs and challenges to youth in Israel (on various topics related to coping with the pandemic)
- The subcommittee for the fight against trafficking women into prostitution
- The committee to promote the status of women
- The special committee for the rights of the child
- Promoting the “Housing First” program
- The forum of employment organizations
- Implementation of the Berliner Committee report for establishing designated departments for sex crimes in the local authorities
- Taking part in the fight to save the third sector during the pandemic crisis in the framework of the “Civic Leadership” organization
- Establishing the Ohel Nechama project in Jerusalem to create a place and strengthen dialogue about

sexual abuse following multiple revelations of sexual abuse in the Haredi community and in the public at large.

In addition, the organization enlisted hundreds of ELEM staff and volunteers, teens and young adults in national struggles throughout the year around sexual violence and violence against women, issues that recur frequently in public discourse as new incidents are exposed.



Human capital: Volunteers and human resources at ELEM

Despite the many challenges and the consequences that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to ELEM volunteers, staff and their families, most of them stayed with ELEM, understanding the importance of this period, and going above and beyond in their work. The past two years showed that, more than ever, the human capital at ELEM is the significant force upon which all the organization's work is founded.

Volunteers

National director: Rutie Levite

1,200
Volunteers

Volunteerism on behalf of vulnerable youth is the core of ELEM's professional work. ELEM is one of the key civil society organizations in Israel, and as such all of ELEM's programs are built on the approach of volunteerism, which sees volunteers as the creative, operating and motivating force of every project. This means that without volunteers, our projects would cease to exist.

ELEM's volunteer division is responsible for developing, recruiting, training and mentoring the organization's volunteers both within the community in the centers and local projects and at the national level.

In the past year, ELEM conducted many volunteer activities in cooperation with businesses such as Bank Hapoalim, Amdocs, Microsoft, Unilever, Electra, Bezeq, Adama, HSBC, HP Indigo and other companies. These projects included programs to promote employment, mentoring, equipment donations, donation of space for conferences and more. In addition, we cooperated in organizing special events such as Good Deeds Day and similar events.

Throughout the year the different ELEM divisions held evening and daytime events to recognize and empower volunteers, which contributed to providing professional skills, strengthened the sense of belonging among volunteers and expressed thanks and recognition of their important contributions.



Human resources

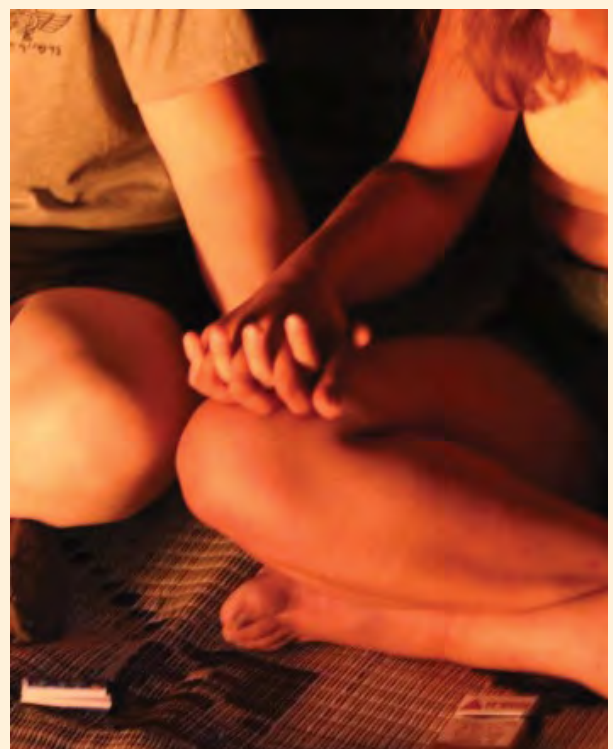
National director: Leah Present Adler

285
Employees

ELEM has **285** employees from diverse professional backgrounds – social work, education, psychology, criminology and more.

The ELEM professional staff come from the entirety of Israeli society – the periphery, the center, the Arab community, the Haredi community and more. ELEM promotes equality, is led by women (the executive director, the president and most of the managers) and most of the staff, **75%**, are women.

2021 brought many challenges in the area of human resources. Many staff and their families were subject to multiple quarantines, and many worked from home. The human resources department saw prevalent senses of isolation, burnout, alienation and uncertainty during the year. The department supported employees who were ill, maintained ongoing connections, conducted trainings for senior managers on managing remotely and more.

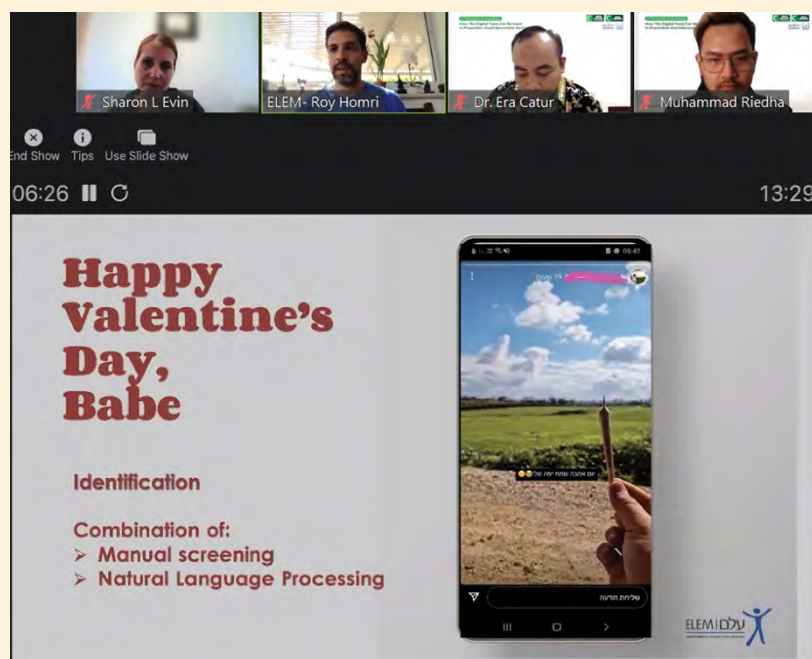


ELEM in the international arena

In 2021, ELEM continued to operate under its standing as an advisory organization to the United Nations on behalf of Israel on issues of vulnerable youth. ELEM is the only organization from Israel in the field of at-risk youth that received this unique international status.

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, ELEM has presented at three UN conferences dealing with drug use. These conferences were in cooperation with the Enosh organization and the Green Crescent organization in Turkey and Indonesia. In addition, ELEM took part in an event of the America-Israel Friendship League on the topic of homelessness. ELEM's reputation in the international arena enables the organization to consult on developments and trends in the field of youth at risk, to work in cooperation with other professional organizations around the world and to put assistance for youth in distress on the international agenda.

ELEM's activities in the international arena holding special consultative status at the United Nations are conducted in parallel to the activities of ELEM's US branch with partners and donors in the USA.



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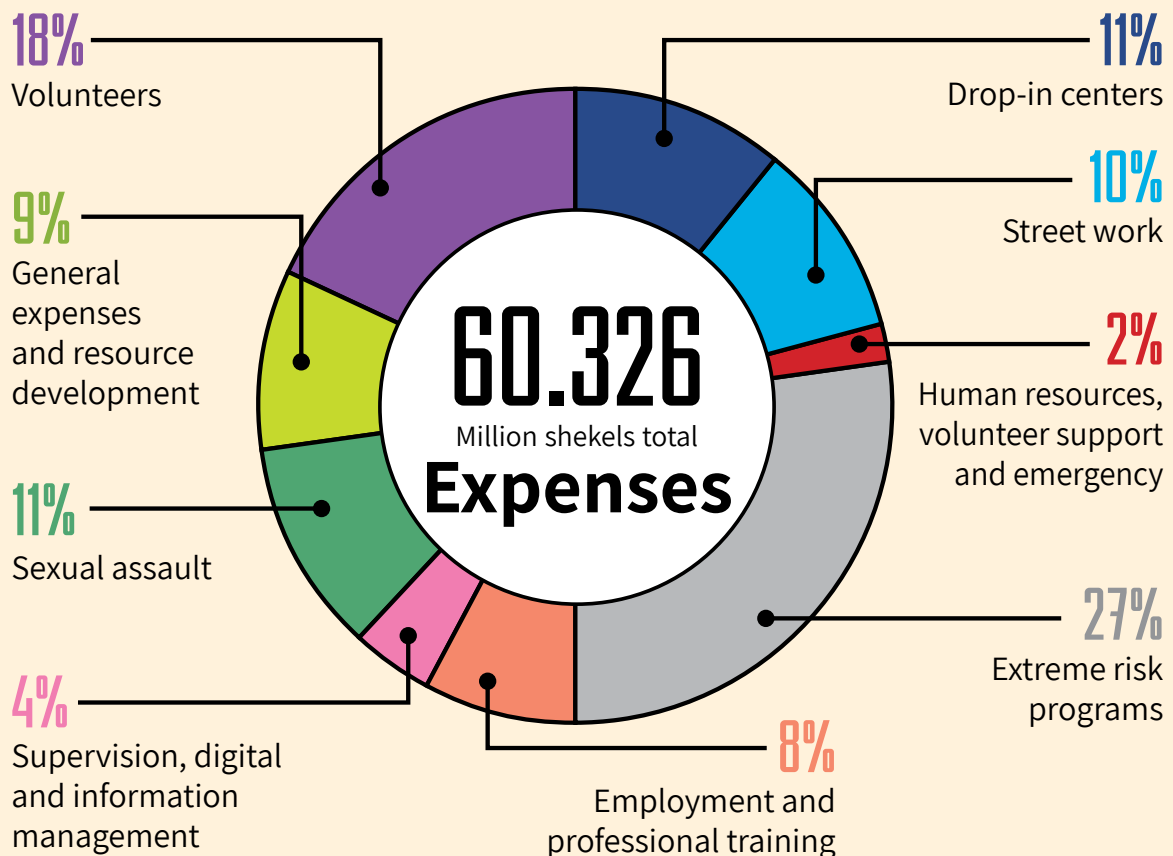
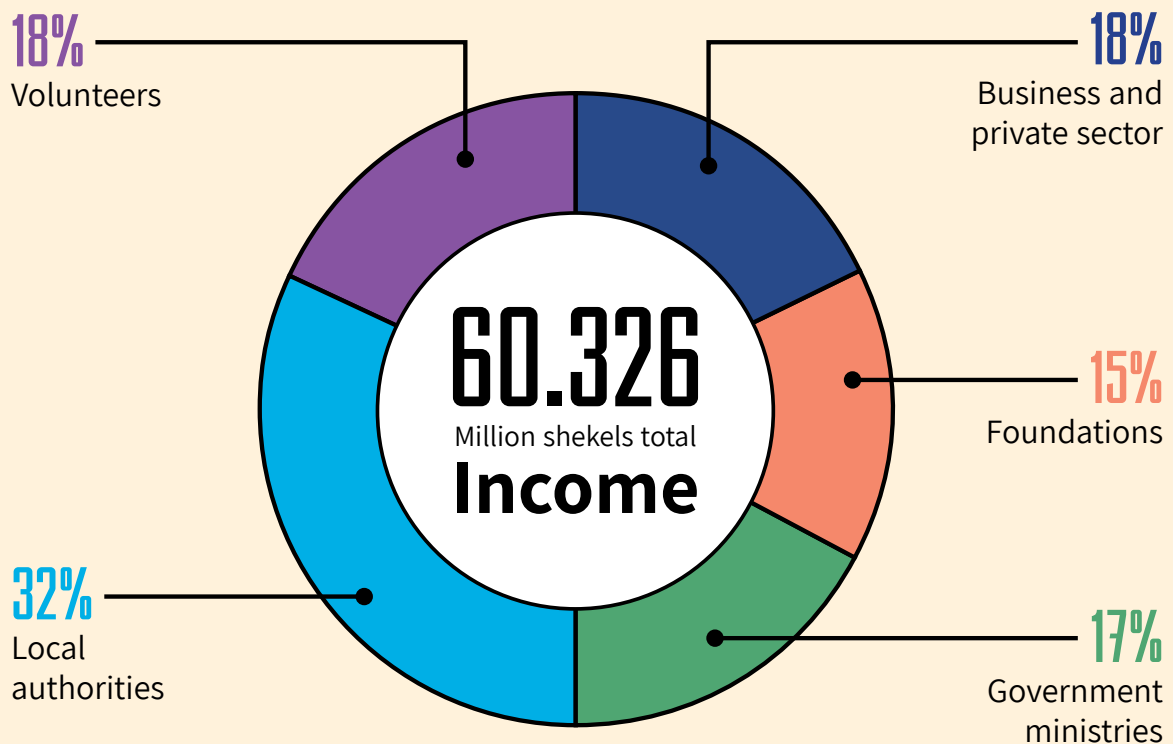
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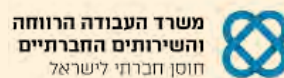
ELEM annual budget



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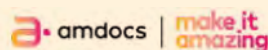


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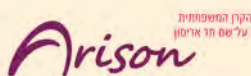


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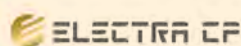
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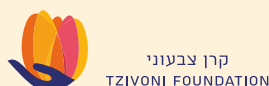
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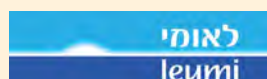
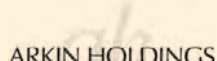
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The Or Yehuda outreach van was "adopted" by Nova Ltd.



Unilever staffers at ELEM drop-in centers on "Good Deeds Day."



Israel President Isaac Herzog and his wife Michal, lighting Hannuka candles with ELEM beneficiaries in Jerusalem.



Social Services Minister Meir Cohen visiting ELEM's Lev 24/7 center with director general Avigdor Kaplan, deputy director general Avi Motola, the ministry's Greater Tel Aviv district manager Limor Bar Tal and Tel Aviv city hall's social services director Sharon Melamed.



ELEM executive director Dana Avraham, national director of extreme risk Maya Baron and regional manager of extreme risk Hadas Gol presenting comedian Orna Banai with a gift after her performance at the division's volunteer appreciation event at Amdocs headquarters.



ELEM presenting our COVID-19 report to former President Reuven Rivlin.



An ELEM staffer and beneficiary from our program treating minors in prostitution, speaking to a Knesset conference on the subject of teenage mental health hospitalizations.



ELEM chair Shlomo Yanai at ELEM's annual fundraising event.



From left: Social Services Ministry director general Avigdor Kaplan, minister Meir Cohen and deputy director Avi Motola visiting ELEM's 24/7 Lev drop-in center for homeless youth.



Electra Consumer Goods staffers challenged the teenage beneficiaries of ELEM's Rehovot drop-in center to a game of soccer.



President Isaac Herzog and his wife Michal lighting Hannukah candles with ELEM beneficiaries.



Adv. Zvika Agmon, ELEM Chair Shlomo Yanai and Bank Hapoalim Chair Ruben Krupik



ELEM's "Outstanding Achievement" awards ceremony at our annual fundraising event: former Executive Director Inbal Dor Kerbel, ELEM President Nava Barak, Bank Hapoalim social banking head Naama Halevi-Peer, Adv. Zvika Agmon and ELEM Chair Shlomo Yanai



Delek Automotive CEO Gil Agmon with then-ELEM Executive Director Inbal Dor Kerbel and ELEM President Nava Barak



Industrialist Dan Propper with wife Suzy



Adv. Zvika Agmon receiving ELEM's Lifetime Achievement Award at the organization's annual fundraising event.



Staff and volunteers of ELEM's "Real Home" project hosting a Passover dinner including ELEM Executive Director Dana Avraham, President Nava Barak and National Director of Extreme Risk Maya Baron.



Popstar Ivri Lider performing with ELEM beneficiary Hadas at ELEM's annual fundraising event.

עלם ואלמ

העמותה לנוער במצבי סיכון (ע"ר) youth in distress



ELEM – Youth in Distress in Israel

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