



JERUSALEM AFRICAN COMMUNITY CENTER 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2020 was a year of unexpected challenges for the Jerusalem African Community Center (JACC). As Israel struggled through the pandemic and multiple nationwide lockdowns, we have seen just how vital our organization is to the 3,000 asylum seekers and persons without civil status living in Jerusalem. Our already vulnerable community has found themselves in an increasingly precarious situation. Over half of the asylum seeker population has been out of work since March, and due to their status they are unable to access any unemployment or government aid. This has led to an extreme humanitarian crisis in Jerusalem with asylum seekers unable to afford food, rent or medical care.

Still, I remain hopeful. Our community, Africans and Israelis, came together this year to ensure both the safety and health of asylum seekers during the crisis, as well as the continuation of JACC's regular programming. From the volunteers who helped us with our weekly food distributions, to the donors who helped us raise over 500,000ILS in humanitarian aid, to our staff for their endless dedication throughout the crisis - I have seen this year how the darkest of times can bring out the best in each of us.

In this report you will find the story of how JACC has coped with this year and how we are coming out of it stronger. I hope you will be as inspired as I am by our community's strength and spirit.

I thank you for your support and hope we can continue to rely on you in 2021.

Best,
Josie Mendelson



WHO WE ARE

JACC was originally founded by Africans and Israelis in 2007 as a grassroots effort to meet the needs of the newly arrived asylum-seeking population. We became an officially registered nonprofit organization in 2014.



STAFF

Josie Mendelson - Director

Gilat Fisher Shusterman- Activities Manager

Tal Shahr - Psychosocial Program Manager

Ari Bronchin- Rights Manager

Tom Sela- Learning Center Manager

Lucia Panasci - Resource Development Manager

Bar Stotzky Elkin -Volunteer Manager

Coral Guedj - Youth Club Manager

Sernai Dori - Community Manager

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ariella Cwikel- Advisor to Psychological Resource Development

Ornit Yehoshua - Treasurer, Advisor to Mentoring Program

Yael Agur Orgal - Advisor to Rights Center, RSD

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Galit Straussman & Shai Segal- Hebrew Program Coordinators

Areilla Sundel and Leora Belinsky-Zimra - English Program
Coordinators

Alon Levy, Ella Shadmi, Dor Zlatin, Darin Nof, Amal Shkirat, Jack

Adam-Isa and Inbal Landau- Rights Advocacy Coordinators

Nikki Littman - Mentoring Coordinator

EVENTS COMMITTEE

Avigail Binnun

Gila Kahn

Meira Lotner

Orna Reshef

Hanna Rubinstein

Jan Weil

OUR COMMUNITY

Between 2006 and 2012, Israel saw a large influx of asylum-seekers from Eritrea, Sudan, and Ethiopia. Escaping war, famine, and corrupt governments, many of them were trafficked through the Sinai Peninsula before arriving in Israel. Today there are over 3,000 asylum seekers residing in Jerusalem, including many families and children.



Though an alarming number of these asylum seekers are survivors of violence and torture, less than 1% of refugee claims have been recognized by the Israeli government. Despite making efforts to integrate into Israeli society, they are routinely referred to as “infiltrators,” and their presence in Israel is met largely with hostility. Israel does grant temporary non-deportation status, allowing asylum seekers to stay in Israel if they renew their visas every 3-6 months. This has led to a precarious situation for Israel’s asylum seekers. They are unable to leave the country because they have no refugee status, but they also cannot live here comfortably due the restrictions put on them.

SNAPSHOT



Priest Brhanemeskel Naizgi is a member of the asylum seeking community in Israel and a volunteer with JACC. Originally from Eritrea, he has lived in Jerusalem since 2008, and is very involved in the Christian community here.

Due to Coronavirus, the asylum-seeking community is facing a host of new difficulties, in particular with finances and health care. He decided to get more involved with JACC during this period, helping with food distributions, translating documents and information, and connecting people with doctors.

Throughout this period, the community has become stronger and according to Naizgi, “JACC assists the community in many ways, and has also taught us how we can help and support each other within the community.”

OUR PROGRAMMING

Our small staff, together with about 100 volunteers, run many regular programs focused on improving the quality of life of the African asylum seekers and persons without status in Jerusalem.



EDUCATION

JACC's educational programs aim to promote the personal, academic, and professional development of all community members, as well as integration into the larger Israeli society and workplace.

Throughout 2020, we have worked hard to continue our regular programming throughout the lockdowns, moving most of our sessions online or outdoors as per the Health Ministry's regulations.

2020

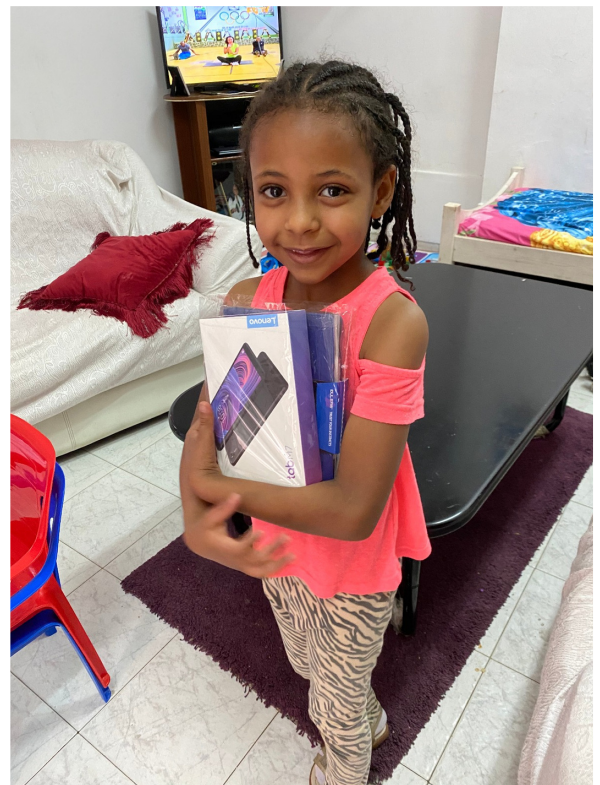
PROGRAMS

- English and Hebrew classes for 50 adults.
- A Youth Club for 12 teenagers addressing their physical, emotional, social and educational needs.
- Our Learning Center helped 15 children receive educational assistance throughout the year.
- 16 children received individualized attention through our Mentoring Program.
- A vocational training program in hairdressing for 20 women in the community (to be completed once Coronavirus restrictions allow).

SNAPSHOT



"I've never had something like this. Thank you so much."



As schools began closing in March and learning moved online, many African children were left without the tools needed to continue their studies. With help from our partners at the Jerusalem Foundation and our friend Itzchak Mendelson, we were able to provide over 60 children with laptops and tablets so they could stay connected and keep up with distance-learning.

RIGHTS AWARENESS

JACC's Rights Advocacy Center offers personalized assistance where it is most crucial: visa assistance, filling out asylum applications RSD (Refugee Status Determination), applying for health insurance and organizing medical assistance where insurance is not available. We also ensure that the refugee community understands and can advocate for themselves with their employers and assist them when their rights have been abused.

2020 PROJECTS

- We helped community members who were eligible receive refunds from the Deposit Law. The 2016 law was overturned by the Israeli Supreme Court in May 2020, and the government was required to allow the community to receive back the money they had paid into the Law.
- A new hotline was created by community members and staff where asylum seekers could turn to for vital support while regular in-person services were disrupted.
- Our regular Rights Awareness clinic helped in over 500 cases where individuals' health and employment rights were ignored.
- Our health team coordinated tests for Coronavirus for members of the community who had come into contact with a carrier.

PSYCHO-SOCIAL

Our Psycho-social Support Center provides emotional, psychological and social support for families and individuals who are in distress, including individual and group therapies. We also provide humanitarian aid in situations where medical or financial assistance is needed.

2020 PROJECTS

- Organized and managed the distribution of over 500,000 ILS in humanitarian aid to those impacted by COVID-19
- Led a workshop in partnership with IsraAID for lay leaders on how to speak to community members who need help coping with the emotional and economic stress of COVID-19.
- Individual and group counseling for 40 members of the community.
- Provided 50 mothers with packages of formula and diapers.



SNAPSHOT



Asylum seekers and those without status are unable to participate in the national healthcare system and must instead opt for private care. During the past year, this has become extremely difficult as most families are no longer able to afford these much more expensive plans.

As a result, 30 children were nearly left without care as families had to decide between paying for rent and paying for insurance. According to JACC's social worker, Tal, "Many of the children suffer from developmental issues and problems, as well as various allergies. Fortunately, with help from our partners at the UNHCR, we were able to provide them with health insurance this year so that they could continue receiving the care they need for healthy childhood development."

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Since the outbreak of the Coronavirus, we at JACC have been working around the clock to ensure the health and safety of Jerusalem's asylum seeker community. Approximately 50% of the community has been out of work since March, and are unable to receive government aid or unemployment. This has led to a humanitarian crisis here in Jerusalem

As a result, JACC has been working as both a welfare service provider and a public advocate for the community during the pandemic.



Aid in Numbers

**Timely
translations of
government
health guidelines**



**Rent
assistance to
30 families**



**13,000 prepared
meals, dry food
packages, and
produce baskets**



**150
supermarket
vouchers
distributed**



**Hundreds of
diaper and baby
formula
packages**



**75 art supply
kits for
children**



**Hotline run by
community
members, helping
hundreds**



**Whatsapp group for
hundreds of
community
members to remain
in constant contact**



OUR PARTNERS

Abraham Hostel

ASSAF- AID Organization for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Israel

ARDC- African Refugee Development Center

CIMI - Center for International Migration and Integration

Beit Sefer Nisui (The Experimental School)

Merkaz Brera -Hebrew University

HIAS - Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

Kav LaOved - Workers Hotline

Lada'at - Choose Well

Lev Ha'ir Community Center

Municipal Welfare Department

MANCHI - The Municipal Education Department

Physicians for Human Rights Israel

Psik Theatre

Psychoactive

Roglit Homeless Shelter

Saint James Vicariate for Hebrew Speaking Catholics in Israel

Shatil

Terem Clinic for Refugees

The Early Childhood Department of the Jerusalem Municipality

The Association for Advancement in Education

The Hotline for Refugees and Migrants

The Jerusalem Intercultural Center

The Minerva Center for Human Rights- Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The Municipal Aid Center for Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Jerusalem

Hebrew University Human Rights Clinic

Mesila - Refugees and Migrant Workers

TAU Refugee Rights Clinic

The School of Social Work and Social Welfare - Hebrew University

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&

Many, many private supporters and donors

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