

# ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2022-2023

CELEBRATING ELI'S 45TH ANNIVERSARY

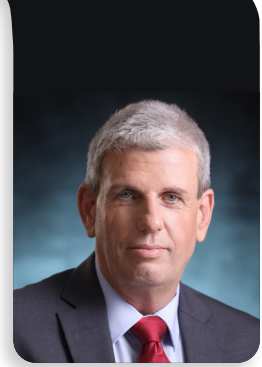


ISRAEL ASSOCIATION  
FOR CHILD PROTECTION  
FOUNDED BY DR. HANITA ZIMRIN



Fall 2024

Dear Friends,



I am writing this letter about a year after our worlds were changed forever — in so many ways. It is also a time when ELI is observing its 45-year anniversary. As the premier organization in Israel dealing with family violence and all types of child abuse, I am proud of the leadership role that ELI took beginning October 9th following the massacre two days before. We didn't know what to expect, and we weren't given any guidance, tools or funding. We just knew that we needed to mobilize our team of trauma experts to help manage the traumas, anxieties and in our therapists' words "do our part in Jewish history" to help the survivors.

Our 45 years of experience assured our proficiency to be on the front lines helping survivors. I am so impressed by and proud of ELI's exceptional therapists who in one day prepared themselves for life-saving work without any advanced notice. They left their homes and families to meet with 2,000 survivors as soon as they arrived at the hotels: survivors who lost members of their immediate family and other loved ones, and who were uprooted from everything they knew. Working 24/7 our therapists were there to provide them with an outstretched hand, a net to prevent them from falling, and a shoulder to cry on.

*We could not have done it without your rapid response and incredible generosity, or without other important funders, such as JFNA, Federations, private foundations and donors. We are eternally grateful.*

Having identified and met with 200 children and their families experiencing the most severe trauma, we are now looking to secure additional funding to ensure our ability to provide them with therapeutic intervention and trauma relief for as long as they require it.

16-year-old Noa's story helps demonstrate ELI's exceptional ability in handling complex trauma. Noa's brother is a soldier who was unfortunately injured in the current war and hospitalized. He was referred to ELI for treatment when he revealed that he had sexually assaulted his sister Noa years earlier. Noa is receiving therapeutic intervention as well, and she is dealing with complex double and maybe even triple trauma: on the one hand, her brother is an Israeli hero who fought bravely to defend his homeland, but in his own home he abused his sister, which is diametrically opposed to "protection." On the other hand, she is feeling guilty that she is the victim instead of him — a victim of the war. And furthermore, she is coping with the trauma itself of being sexually assaulted by someone close to her.

We thank you for your unwavering support and friendship,

Sincerely,  
Eran Zimrin

**ELI Executive Committee:**

Zvi Shevach, Chairman  
Ariel Eldor, Treasurer

Bilha Finkelman, Secretary  
Eli Yaish

Beth Galinsky, President,  
American Friends of ELI

## SWORDS OF IRON WAR: ELI'S WARTIME RESPONSE

Following the October 7th massacre, ELI is proud of its swift and focused response with the survivors. On October 9th we set up trauma relief centers in the hotels where the survivors and evacuees were located. We knew the importance of being on the scene as soon as possible to minimize manifestations of PTSD. Since that time we have been providing life-saving critical mental health support and complex trauma relief.

In the first stage of our work in the hotels, we met with 1,300 adults and 700 children, helping to reduce the basic anxiety of the survivors, allowing them to sleep, eat and communicate, and subsequently return to normal functioning. We next identified 200 children (primarily) and their families who were the most severely traumatized among those whom we met in the hotels, to administer long term therapeutic intervention.

With thanks to JFNA, Federations, private foundations and donors, we succeeded in raising the funds to cover the trauma relief work we provided in the first weeks of the war, and for a year of therapy for approximately 90% of those we identified for longer term intervention. Of course, more than one year of therapy will be needed for most of them.

Moving forward... there continue to be new needs. There are thousands of people who left the North and have been living in temporary situations. We received hundreds of calls from families who were evacuated from their homes and who are struggling to find help. Many are still living in the hotels, and often without income. The families are living in one room "in a pressure cooker" and the children often suffer as a result – physically or emotionally, or are being neglected. One case in particular was of a 14-year-old girl who has been walking around alone for months while her parents are drunk in their hotel room.

Anecdotally, we have been hearing the difference we are making in the lives of our clients. Quantitatively, we are happy to report that our clients are meeting the milestones for therapeutic improvement that we have set for them, and they are returning to function in their academic, professional, family, and social circles. We measure this success by quantifying the improvement in the therapeutic milestones our therapists determine.

Our successes are best demonstrated by sharing stories:

**Returning trust and security to a child.** A 9-year-old boy hid under the bed in his safe room while his father used Herculean efforts to keep the door closed and was successful. They both were rescued. The mother had been staying with her mother in the hospital in Beersheva at that time so she wasn't there. The boy had a lot of anxiety and lost trust in his parents (the responsible grownups). After 6 months of treatment, he regained trust and faith in his parents that they will take care of him.

**Going back to school and routine.** An 8-year-old girl wasn't able to leave the hotel room in the first weeks of the war. Her family had relocated but she wasn't able to go to the new school. Everyone else was in class and she was on Zoom. Eventually, her therapist helped her go back to school.

**We additionally have the following data points of our work thus far with the survivors:**

**98%/ 90%\* Of our clients were diligent about attending their therapy sessions**  
**94%/ 78%\* Succeeded in achieving the daily operational tasks we set for and with them**  
**In 79%/ 65%\* of the clients we saw an improvement in their social skills, and**  
**In 98%/ 90%\* we have assessed that they've experienced relief in their acute symptoms.**

\*The first number represents children under 18 and the second number represents adults 18+

## HOTLINE

ELI maintains the only hotline in Israel dedicated specifically to the issue of child abuse, and it is nationally recognized in Israel as the “central address” for treatment of child abuse. Staffed by a combination of professionals and volunteers who speak three languages – Hebrew, Russian, and Arabic – the hotline is ELI’s point of entry for many of its clients. The hotline fields over 10,000 calls annually from abused children themselves as well as concerned friends, family members, neighbors and professionals.

The hotline has been a vital tool during the Iron Swords War, especially since the spring of 2023 when we introduced an online hotline, the Purple Button. 85% of our referrals currently are via the Purple Button. We are now getting more requests for information, such as parenting advice from grandparents who want to help their children and grandchildren, and questions about what constitutes abuse from concerned friends, neighbors and relatives.

This hotline is unique in that approximately 20% of calls come from perpetrators themselves; abusive parents call due to guilt over what they have done, or fear about what they might do if they don't get help.

## WORKING WITH THE IDF

For nearly ten years, ELI has collaborated with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to bring awareness of sexual abuse to the Army and to provide therapeutic intervention to those soldiers who were sexually abused.

The IDF plays an important role in Israel and most especially during wartime when cases of abuse usually increase due to high stress and instability.



Victims of sexual abuse include soldiers who were sexually abused as children; often, the abusive situation continues when these soldiers return home on leave, making it difficult for them to function in the army. Victims may also be sexually abused by a superior officer. In these cases, the pain of the abuse is often compounded by the fear of reprisals. Soldiers may also be sexually abused by other soldiers or by a stranger or a friend during their army service.

ELI has put the issue on the army’s agenda that sexual abuse will not be tolerated, and has helped implement procedures for reporting, receiving therapy and punishing perpetrators.

Our program consists of:

- Therapy for soldiers who are victims of abuse. ELI is proud to be the only civilian organization permitted to treat soldiers.
- Supervision for army therapists and mental health officers who work with sexual abuse victims.
- Training of officers, both from a values-based perspective (that every soldier is entitled to be protected and free of abuse) and from a practical approach (teaching indicators for abuse, relevant army regulations, procedures, and punitive measures).
- Training Quality of Life officers: that is, female soldiers who are responsible for the welfare of the soldiers in their units. As women, they play an important role in the program. They get a more intensive version of the officer training. In addition, ELI trains trainers to expand the impact of the program, and trains a select group to develop and implement their own awareness campaigns.

Increased awareness leads to an increase in reports, changes the culture of the IDF to one where it is okay to speak about the issue, sends a message that soldiers have the right to be safe and free of abuse, and that perpetrators will be punished.



## THERAPY SERVICES

In its 45 years of existence, ELI has proven that therapeutic intervention is the only way for children and their families to heal and return to “normal” functioning. ELI’s staff of social workers, psychologists and other clinicians provides therapy to abused children and their families throughout Israel. Therapy can last anywhere from a few sessions to several years, but in general it lasts for about a year. ELI contends that when possible, treating family members in addition to the victims of abuse is the only way to rid families of abusive patterns and behaviors, and to break the intergenerational cycle.

Once child abuse is identified, it is critical to address the emotional consequences. ELI helps children to restore their basic sense of trust and supports their emotional foundations. Therapy helps a child to regain self-esteem and change the fatalistic approach to life that often develops when the most basic bond in their lives is broken. Children need to understand that they’re not bad children, but that something bad happened to them that wasn’t their fault. ELI’s team of therapists works diligently to minimize the scars, to allow the child to grow to reach his or her full potential, and to become a contributing member of society.

ELI provides parental guidance and support both as part of the therapeutic process and as a preventive measure for at-risk families when there is a chance of abuse. Due to the traumatic impacts of the war and its aftermath, in addition to other factors brewing well before, ELI has over 5,000 children in therapy, in addition to thousands more of their siblings, parents, and extended family members.

Even before the war, ELI was seeing more adults than ever in therapy – adults who either never received any treatment as children or weren’t treated sufficiently. Due to the high level of stress under which most Israelis are currently living, they are even more motivated to come forward now as these stressors compound the long-term scars of abuse which they have been carrying with them.



## SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Without question, the most vulnerable group of children are those with special needs. Children with special needs are abused at a rate of approximately ten times higher than that of normative children, and they may not understand what constitutes abuse. If they do, they may not know how to stop it. Often if they try to report an incident of abuse, they are ignored or misunderstood.

**“Thank God I'm alive. It is thanks to my therapist that my life is worth living.”**

17 year-old Noya

By placing therapists onsite in the schools for children with special needs, we involve the educational staff in the therapeutic process. And together with the parents, the team envelops the child in a therapeutic environment. The therapists serve as a resource to the educational staff and are able to identify new cases of abuse. Abused children with special needs and their family members benefit from therapeutic intervention provided in a seamless manner while the children are in school. The program continues to grow, increasing the number of schools participating, our geographic reach, and the types of disabilities which the children present.

## AWARENESS AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS

Most of the time, children do not tell anyone when they are abused. They are afraid and ashamed. Sometimes their abuser even threatens them. They feel responsible for what happened, or they simply don't know how to tell.

ELI has developed an innovative and proactive approach to reach these children. In schools throughout Israel, ELI presents musicals and theatrical programs, edutainments, which are designed to educate children of all ages to understand what abuse is, and their right to be free of abuse. The programs are performed by actors who often are also social workers. In addition to the performances for children, ELI's staff meets with and trains teachers, staff and counselors on how to recognize and report potential incidents of abuse. Parents are invited to participate when appropriate.

This program, which proved very important after the pandemic, continues to be critical now during wartime. It enables ELI to provide a safe space for children to express themselves and for us to teach them coping tools.

***100,000 CHILDREN PARTICIPATE IN ELI'S SCHOOL-BASED AWARENESS AND PREVENTION PROGRAMS PER YEAR WITH 1.5% REVEALING NEW CASES OF ABUSE***

With the permission and blessing of the Education Ministry, ELI has administered this program for over 20 years. In any given year, ELI conducts more than 300 activities in 100 schools, out of which come hundreds of disclosures of abuse that were previously unknown. There are many examples of children who, after seeing the prevention program, alert their parents or school teachers about abuse they have suffered at the hands of friends or relatives.

ELI's Abuse Awareness and Prevention Programs have been adapted to various audiences including children of immigrant populations, Ultra-Orthodox and Arab children, and children with special needs. Programs have been adapted for various ages and maturity levels as well. For example, younger children are taught body boundaries with the help of puppets, while older students are introduced to the dangers they can encounter online and are given tools to prevent problems or stop abuse if it is already happening.



### INTERNET SAFETY AND CYBERBULLYING PREVENTION

Cyberbullying is a well-known problem. Beyond using social media as a “bully pulpit,” children and teenagers abuse other children who are also being socially isolated and blackmailed online. The anonymity of the internet creates an easier means for the perpetrators, sometimes causing their victims to commit suicide. Consequently, ELI specially designed Cyberbullying Prevention and Internet Safety programs.

Committed to being on the cutting edge of service delivery in the child welfare arena, ELI identifies and contends with new issues as they arise. The issue of online sexual predators is challenging, and ELI's approach to this problem is as holistic and comprehensive as exists anywhere in the world.

### SAFE PARENTING SCHOOLS

ELI's Safe Parenting Schools are the ultimate child abuse prevention program, dealing with the family before the serious damage has been done, and helping to prevent both new cases of abuse and repeated cases of abuse in children who have been previously abused. The overall goal is to give children a better chance to live safely at home and develop healthfully, by

helping parents make changes and improve their functioning within their families. With a small investment of resources, ELI can prevent big mistakes from occurring. Safe Parenting Schools, especially presented in times of stress, can help good or average parents become better parents while also providing an opportunity to identify and work intensively with neglectful parents. ELI promotes the safety of children and strengthens the family unit by helping parents with their parenting skills and providing them with a support network.

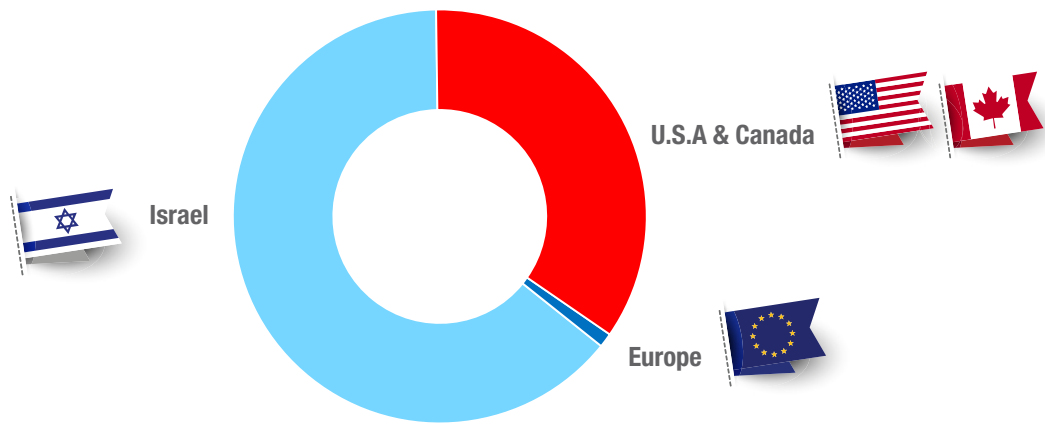
Children are concurrently given an opportunity to learn and deal with difficult family issues. Furthermore, the Safe Parenting Schools help families deal with their isolation and loneliness by creating a natural support social network. ELI assigns a liaison to the parents to help connect them to social services, which they are otherwise hesitant to utilize or don't know how or what they are.

For young women at risk, ELI takes the program a step further, helping young mothers from difficult circumstances to deal with the multilayered problems of intergenerational abuse and poverty.

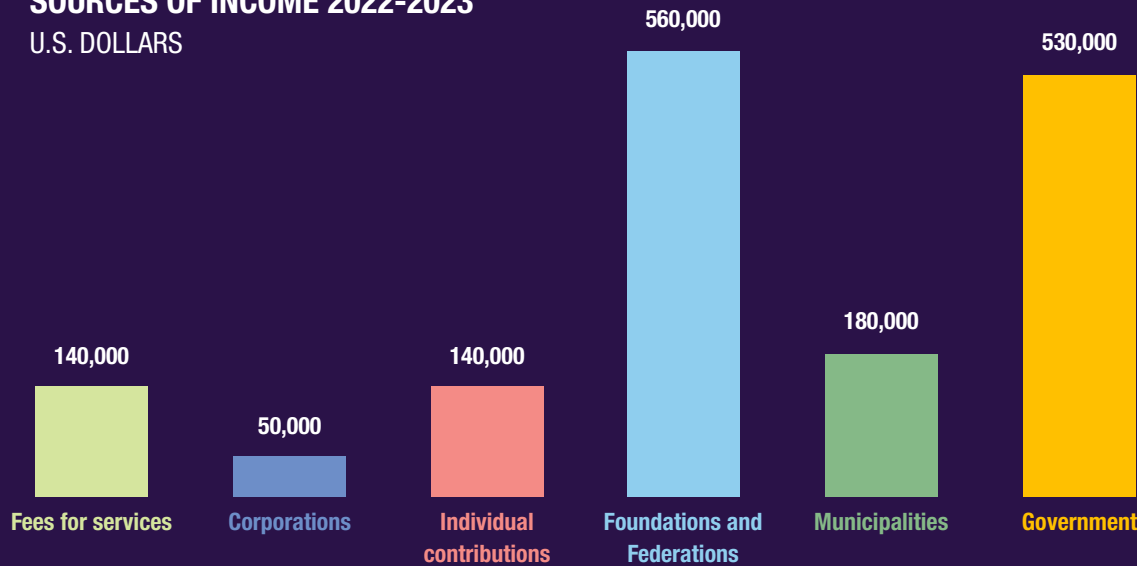
Many resources are invested in order to mend the devastating results of parental neglect or ignorance. ELI believes that it is much more ethical, logical and economical to invest in prevention, thus paving the way for functioning stable families.

FINANCIALS

ORIGIN OF FUNDS RAISED



SOURCES OF INCOME 2022-2023  
U.S. DOLLARS



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