



Women's Crisis Shelter 2019 Annual Activity Report

The Women's Crisis Shelter, that operates a multicultural shelter for battered women and their children, continued its ongoing activities in 2019.

During this year, fifty-three women and fifty-nine children were treated at the Shelter. In addition, three additional women with their six children resided at the Transitional Dwelling operated by the Shelter.

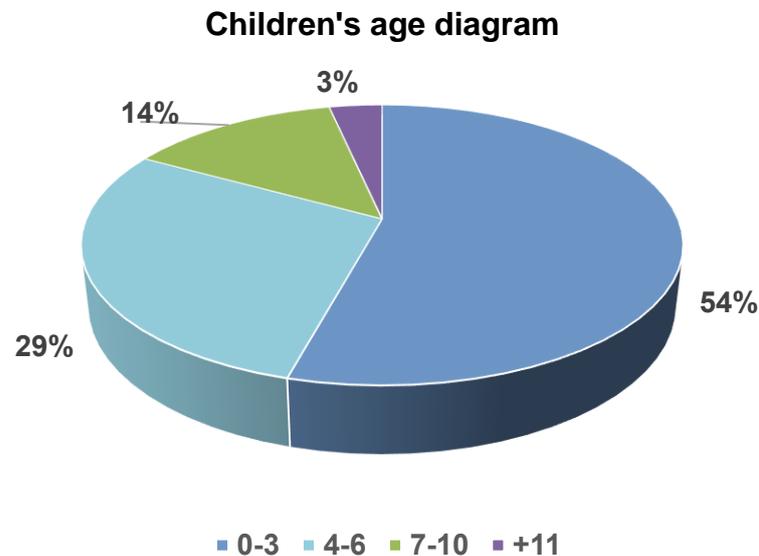
The Shelter and the transitional dwelling were full most days of the year.

Who were the Shelter's women residents?

- a. The women were 18-60 years old. 26% of the women were aged 18-25 years old, 62% were 26-40 years old. Most of the young women who resided at the shelter were Arab.
- b. Among the Shelter's residents, 31 women (58%) were Israeli Arabs, 14 (26%) veteran Jews, 4 (8%) immigrants from the former Soviet Union, 1 Jewish immigrant from Ethiopia, and another 3 women (6%) lacking Israeli citizenship.
- c. A large number of the women (40%) had only elementary school or partial elementary school education; 30% of the women had a high school education. Only two women reported having studied after high school.
- d. Twenty-two women (42%) resided at the Shelter without children. Seventeen of them were mothers who chose to or had to escape to the Shelter without their children. The Shelter's staff established communication channels between the mothers and their children.
- e. Three women arrived pregnant to the Shelter. During their stay, one of them, a mother of one other child, gave birth.
- f. Twenty-six women (43%) resided at the Shelter for a period of less than one month and another eight women (13%) resided at the Shelter less than two months.
- g. Twenty-two women (42%) resided at the Shelter less than a month. Twenty-one women (46%) resided at the Shelter for a period of two-to-twelve months. Six women who arrived to the Shelter during 2019 continued their stay at the Shelter during 2020.

An analysis of the women's destinations on departure shows that 55% of the women chose lives free of violence in the community – 15% chose to live independently in the community, 38% chose to depart to non-violent friends or family. Another 3 women (6%) returned to their homes and to their abusers after signing a legal agreement with their abusers (who were committed to end the violence), most of the others continue their residence in the Shelter or in the transitional dwelling during 2020.

The Shelter treated fifty-nine resident children. The children received specialized treatment, which included emotional support, educational support and enrichment activities.



2019 data shows a stabilization of the tendency of the last few years toward increasing numbers of toddlers under the age of three.

49 children (83%) of the children were under the age of six. They participated in educational frameworks in the Shelter - Children over age three, attended the kindergarten on the Shelter's premises. Children under the age of three attended the Shelter's new day care center. This framework was developed by our staff during 2018-2019, due to the tendency of increasing numbers of children under the age of three, in order to adjust our services to our residents' (women and children) needs.

Activities

During the period of their residence at the Women's Crisis Shelter, the women and children received a roof above their heads, food and clothing, and a variety of services and activities whose goals are to care for the women and children, and to aid the women in choosing a non-violent life for themselves and their children.

Empowerment for Independence Project

This project includes a variety of activities whose goal is to provide emotional support for the women, to restore their self-esteem and thus give them practical tools for dealing with independent life.

The activities in this project in 2019 included: Individual therapy (at least once a week for each woman); Individual utilization of women's rights in different institutions; group therapy; individual parental guidance; private Hebrew lessons – for a few women; empowerment and enrichment workshops (including workshops for a safe and secure use in cell-phones, beauty and care workshops, cooking and baking workshops, arts and crafts workshops, home-budget management, drawing lessons, yoga workshops and more); accompaniment of women in the process of entering the workforce; trips to nature and fun-days (some

of them with the children); breakfast outdoors (for women and their therapists) and more.

During their stay in the Shelter, some of the women worked, primarily in cleaning and housekeeping positions.

It is important to mention that the project's staff emphasized individual custom-made support and help for the women in a variety of aspects, as they approached independence, leaving the Shelter, and afterwards.

All of these activities and services combined to empower the women and to support her choice in lives free of violence.

An Indulgent meal made by a volunteer chef



Amendment to the guaranteed minimum income law

During 2017, the Knesset legislated an amendment to the guaranteed minimum income law. The amendment states that a woman who resides in a battered women's shelter is entitled to ask for a minimum income allowance – even if she did not get this allowance before her arrival to a shelter.

This amendment came into force in June 2017, and had an immediate positive influence on the women's economic condition.

During 2019, seventeen of the Shelter residents were eligible to receive minimum income allowance – and our staff helped them to utilize this right.

Children's Treatment, Education and Enrichment Project

This project provides a range of services at the shelter for the children who have been affected by exposure to violence in their homes. Some of these children have been exposed to violence against their mothers; some have personally experienced physical and even sexual abuse.

The project's activities included: activating a kindergarten on the Shelter's premises; activating a day care center for children under the age of three on the Shelter's premises; treatment by a social worker and/or by another therapist; continuous workshops once a week during the school year (pet workshop, rhythm-music workshop, creative workshop, and a nature workshop); an educational

framework held during the summer and school holidays; a learning center in the shelter; accompaniment of the children to appropriate educational frameworks; parties for birthdays and holidays; daily after-school activities; excursions to children's theatre and films; visits to the zoo and circus; trips to a swimming pool and the Mediterranean Sea; trips and outings and more.

Additionally, each mother received individualized parenting guidance and the women's group therapy sessions discussed many parenting issues.

In a creative workshop



Transitional Dwelling Project

The residence of women and their children in the transitional dwelling represents a stage in the transition from protected life in the shelter to totally independent lives. During 2019, three women with their six children resided in the transitional dwelling. All of the women worked for their living.

Legal Consultation and Representation Project

During 2019, twenty-seven of the women residing in the shelter used legal representation services; seventeen of them received services from the Shelter's lawyer. Part of the women were represented by a lawyer prior to their arrival to the shelter.

Other women residents received legal consultation from the Shelter's lawyer. Additionally, during this year, our lawyer continued, within the framework of the project, to represent women who resided in the shelter in the past, and whose legal issues have not yet been resolved.

In most cases women, after complicated procedures, succeed in utilizing their legal rights that derive from their relationships – including custody, alimony, property division, etc.

Partnerships in the community

The Women's Crisis Shelter Amuta works to raise awareness of violence against women in general, and to professionals who meet and serve women and children affected by violence in particular, including:

- Leading the cooperation between the shelter operators in Israel. The CEO of the Amuta acts as the chairperson of the Forum of Shelter Operators, and our shelter's manager is acting as the chairperson of the Shelter's managers Forum.
- Participation in discussions on issues regarding domestic violence at the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality meetings.
- Participation in a forum of organizations engaged in the fight against violence against women in Haifa.
- Hosting medical students in the shelter in order to expose them to the phenomenon of violence against women.

The Ministry of Social Affairs tender for operating a shelter

During 2019, the Women's Crisis Shelter Amuta won the Ministry of Social Affairs national tender for operating a multicultural shelter for the next five years, with the possibility of extending the contract for another five years.

New Premises for the Shelter

During 2019 the Amuta signed a long-term leasing agreement for a building and surrounding area. Most of the planning was carried out and required procedures for obtaining building permits began.

The Shelter's activity will be duplicated in this structure - after extensive construction, renovation and adjustment work is expected to be completed by 2021.

Thanks

This year the Shelter has benefitted from great support from the community. Organizations, foundations, companies and individuals chose to support the Shelter's activities by donating equipment, services, goods, activities and funds.

Additionally, approximately 50 students, pupils at the Leo Baeck Education Center, a few retirees and national service volunteers chose to volunteer in the Shelter. Their contribution to our activities is very much appreciated.

We take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to what is done for battered women and their children:

- The Shelter's dedicated staff
- The Ministry of Social Affairs that supports our activities – professionally and financially
- The Steering Committee
- The Board of Directors
- The donors from all walks of life – foundations, companies, and individuals
- The volunteers who give their heart and souls to the children

Your continuous support is vital to our activities!

