Annual Report 2016

The Garden Library
Community Center for Education, Culture and Arts
Dear Partners and Friends,

I am happy to share our 2016 Annual Activity Report with you. For many years the Levinsky Library has become not only a library, but also a unique community center, which facilitates different community activities, both educational and cultural for hundreds of men and women in Neve Shaanan. Our annual report presents four of our projects: a youth and children center, an educational center for adults (CEC), a cultural center and a cooperative of seamstresses. Each of these projects has made significant progress this year and it is with great excitement and pride that we share them with you here.

2016 was full of educational activities. This was a year in which the library expanded to become a major center, a home and family for parents and children, youth and adults who are part of the different communities that live in the neighbourhood. Last year, the number of students in the CEC grew significantly. We formulated a new joint work model for parents and children and opened a playground for pre-schoolers. A dialogue group was established between the children of refugees and Israeli children born in the neighbourhoods of South Tel Aviv. Our culture center has expanded and is operated today by many artists from the refugee community. The cooperative of seamstresses launched a new line of products marketed in Israel and Berlin. Information about many other activities can be found in the report. At the same time we continued advocacy for the neighbourhood and especially for its children. One of our major successes was to overturn the Tel Aviv municipality’s decision to demolish the only public space in the neighbourhood - Levinsky Park.

All the positive activity notwithstanding, it is important to remember that the situation in the neighbourhood continues to be unacceptable, and in fact to worsen. The situation does not allow a secure life for its residents, whether they are seeking asylum or long-term residency. Drug trafficking, violence, crime, neglect, racism, the lack of social services, all make it difficult if not impossible for the inhabitants of the area to attaining and maintaining a decent standard of living. This situation is due, for the most part, to the inhumane aggressive government policy that does all it can to make their life in Israel unbearable.

It is important to me to thank the special working team of the library personally. It is clear to me that the center is so much more than a work place for you all. It is moving to see how each one of you takes each task seriously and by doing so achieve important success in your areas of activity. Thank you all for being who you are. It is a great honour for me to work by your side.

In addition, we owe a big thanks to our hundreds of volunteers, donors and supporters who have supported us this year and in years past. All of this blessed activity could not have happened without you standing with us. It gives us the power and strength to continue working together to create a better reality for Israelis, refugees and immigrants in Neve Shaanan.

Dafna Lichtman
Director
Project Summary

The Children Center seeks to promote the academic, social and political capacities of children and to increase the protection of children of asylum seekers and migrant workers by supporting parents’ efforts to fully exercise their children’s rights and through advocacy targeting welfare and educational institutions, demanding they act to promote the wellbeing of the children. The Children Community Center is one of the only community centers available to the migrant and refugee children residing in the neighborhood.

20 parents and 20 children participated in our Parents-Children Group in which children and parents engaged in a joint process of dialogue, aimed to strengthen the ties between them and to improve the parents’ parental capacities and skills.

120 children and 25 parents participated weekly in our ‘After-School Community Centre’, which engaged the children and their parents in a diverse range of enrichment courses and a ‘play space’.

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150 children participated in a two month ‘summer camp’.

45 children between the ages of 9-17 participated in The Levinski Teams, which included soccer trainings, group sessions and a study centre.

On the 25th of May 2016 Milardo, a son of an asylum seeker who is a long time participant at the Children Center and active in the Levinski team, met Israel’s President, Reuven Rivlin, and handed him a signed football.

During the meeting the president asked Milardo about his hopes for the future:

“I would like to have a [legal] status in Israel because I want to advance in soccer and play on a professional team. I am delighted to receive this award, yet I am afraid my father will be deported from Israel. I wish that my father won't have to fear, and that I too won't fear. I would like to ask the President to make sure that we are treated the same as white people are.”

The President said during the event that he hopes we will come to see the day when asylum seekers will be part of Israeli society.

Multiple Advocacy Actions were implemented throughout the year. These were aimed at promoting the protection and wellbeing of the children through direct actions targeting local, national and international decision makers.

15 children participated in soccer training and Dialogue groups with a Jewish-Israeli soccer team from a religious school in South Tel Aviv.
Main accomplishments

The academic, social and political capacities of the children improved.

The children were better protected due to the extensive activities the Children Center created. These diverted them from the hazards of the streets to a safe environment.

All the activities contributed to creating a community and a sense of belonging among the children, their parents and the volunteers.

The Levinski Teams contributed to strengthening the children’s dialogue capacities using constructive and non-violent communication. They also strengthened the children’s self-esteem by creating a platform through which the children experienced success, hope and fulfillment. The encounters between asylum seeker youth and religious Jewish Israeli children contributed to the promotion of greater mutual respect, tolerance and reduction of violence.

The Parents Children group enabled the children and their parents to spend “quality time” together in a structured and positive environment.

As a result of the Advocacy Actions, five children were placed in free after-school educational activity groups. We also succeeded in getting the municipality to put up a net for shade, to improve the children’s playground in the park, and, most significantly, we got the municipality to commit to constructing in the near future additional playgrounds and a basketball court on the premises of the now defunct old central bus station.

The work done with the parents contributed to the improvement of the parents’ involvement in their children’s lives and enlargement of their parental capacities. In addition, many parents came to see the Garden Library and its staff as the ‘go-to’ place where they can gather information and receive assistance on issues concerning their status, approaching the educational system and employment.

Yoav, the Children Center’s project coordinator tells about the first meeting between one of the Levinski Team’s and the Jewish-Israeli group from Kfar Shalem (the nearby neighborhood):

15 minutes’ drive East – and for many of the children from the Levinski team - this was already a unique change of atmosphere from their daily routine in Neve Sha’anani. On the bus drive over to the meeting the children’s curiosity arose. The drive through Ha-Tikva neighborhood (adjacent to Neve Sha’anani) was like entering a foreign territory. Stories they heard in the past about demonstrations and clashes between the two communities added fear to the ride. Women, holding baskets full of groceries bought from the nearby market, entered the bus and sat in-between the children and began to speak with them. The children were very excited. Parents and children from the neighborhood watched us as we entered the school where the meeting was to take place. The children from the other group looked as excited as our group. The Levinski team had made a name for itself in the central district -- as a talented group of soccer players who had won the last tournaments.

Minutes after we entered, while a “layer of thin ice” lay between the players, a soccer ball was drawn out and the children immediately began to play. We stopped them and asked them to create a circle to first get to know each other. They instantly realized that they seem to like the same soccer teams and adore the same soccer players. After the short introduction and guided by the two coaches the groups began to play soccer. During the games the children had to practice cooperation, teamwork and tolerance. They interacted and spoke to each other about soccer and their personal lives. Throughout the game, the children did what children do best – they began to play and connect one to another, without boundaries and stereotypes and without letting anything stop them.

Looking at the children - I was really moved because I saw how such a popular sport-can challenge and go beyond politics, national perceptions and stereotypes about the “other”- and can naturally connect between people.
Project Summary

The Community Education Center (CEC) offers evening-classes for members of the migrant worker and asylum seeker communities in response to the lack of educational opportunities for them. The CEC is essentially a community-based initiative founded and coordinated to-date by a leadership group comprised of members of both the migrant worker and asylum seekers communities. The adult evening courses aim at improving the knowledge and skills of members of the migrant workers and asylum seeker communities in order to better their opportunities in the job market and their orientation to Israeli society and equip them with skills to better advocate for their rights.

133 students attended the Winter Semester (Feb-May 2016).
127 students attended the Summer Semester (July-Oct 2016).
169 students attended the Fall Semester (Nov 2016-Feb 2017).

2 members of the leadership group are members of the organization’s board of directors.
10 members of the leadership group, meet every week, in order to coordinate the courses and act as the project’s steering committee.
30 all volunteers: 5 teachers are members of the migrant and asylum seeker communities while the rest are Israeli.

“In the CEC I studied a few courses– first photography and then two courses in Photoshop. And now we are studying this fantastic course (video editing) with our friends. Here in Israel – as a refugee – we couldn’t get a chance to study, we are young - it is our time to study, but unfortunately they don’t give us a chance... we work and when we finish our job we come to study... Education – it needs attention, it needs hard work.... Knowledge is something you keep in your mind and you use it for life.”

Eritrea, in Israel since August 2009
Main accomplishments

The CEC has continued to serve as a focal point of education for the communities despite the persecution members of these communities face in Israel.

There is a continuing increase in the number of students in the Hebrew and English courses. Communities despite the persecution members of these communities face in Israel.

There is an increase in the number of women students.

The formation of dedicated group of volunteer teachers.

Sophie Shanir, CEC project Coordinator since 2014, and a Palestinian citizen of Israel, tells about her experience in the CEC:

The dynamics and the work has become part of my daily life. I don’t feel as if I am going to work. Although I have been with the CEC for some time now, I feel that the CEC progresses “one step at a time”, and I want to be there while it changes.

We (myself and the leadership group) are continually looking for new ways to improve the center and to make it better. We keep asking ourselves how to continue and answer the student’s needs and how to make the teachers content with their work. I am always happy when I see students who return semester after semester.

Sophie says that she thinks that students come to study because they need the tools we offer them through the computer or Hebrew courses, for example. These are basic skills that will help them survive here or in other countries. There are also people who come to study in order to improve their businesses or so they can open businesses in the future. Most importantly though, she says, is that studying in the CEC reminds them that in the context of an aggressive and oppressive system they continue to be human-beings. They want to feel that they have and are developing skills and that they belong to a vibrant community.

Courses

Basic Computers | Advanced Computers | Basic Photoshop
Advanced Photoshop
Basic Computer Technician
Advanced Computer Technician | Raising children in a foreign society | 5 levels of Hebrew | 3 levels of English courses | Sewing | Designing Websites | Photography | Video Editing.

"I want to be a famous film maker in my country, in Africa. There are a lot of things to do in my country.”

Yasser Adam, from Sudan
The Cultural Center provides a space for various communal and cultural activities and a program of active encouragement of local art work, with the purpose of creating social change and dialogue with Israeli audiences. The center sponsors activities such as music classes, support for community music ensembles, a space for social and political community gatherings and educational activities, such as tours and lectures for various groups of Israelis. The center is managed by Togod Omar, a member of the Sudanese community, who coordinates all the activities.

Students who have attended the center over the years, have begun to teach the different courses. There are enthusiastic reactions from people who attended the educational activities, such as tours and lectures for Israelis. Participants ask many questions, are often surprised that such activities take place in the Levinski Park, some recognize that they need to rethink their preconceived notions, and recommend the tours to other groups.

Togod arrived in Israel over five years ago as an asylum seeker from Sudan. He has been coordinating the Cultural Center for the past year and a half. Togod joined the Garden Library as a member of the theater group which performed the play “One Strong Black” in 2013. He completed his studies as a computer technician at the John Brice College, and today teaches this course at the Community Education Center. Togod says: “I love the Garden Library, the children, and in fact everything that takes place here. I feel that we, the staff and volunteers, are all working together. It gives purpose to our lives. And this is also what I tell my mother, when we speak on the phone. I have a family here, and we work together”.

### Main accomplishments

- **The center has become a cultural and social point of contact for the communities**
- **Strong connections have been established between the students and the teachers.**
- **There is a growing demand by the communities to use the center for meetings, attend classes, and use the rehearsal room. Word about the activities in the center is spread by the participants.**
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- **There are enthusiastic reactions from people who attended the educational activities, such as tours and lectures for Israelis. Participants ask many questions, are often surprised that such activities take place in the Levinski Park, some recognize that they need to rethink their preconceived notions, and recommend the tours to other groups.**
**Project Summary**

Community in Creation is a social fashion project that set out to enable women from the migrant communities in Israel to form a sewing collective that will generate additional income for the participants and their families. The collective is based on a model of a cooperative production process, owned by the women, in which organizational as well as designing decisions are made by the group based on consensus.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>30 students</th>
<th>8 women</th>
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<td>participate in a sewing class taught by the members of the collective.</td>
<td>lead the collective.</td>
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The group wrote a “statement review” that exemplifies their values and ideas on the collective’s work, which serves as the basis for drafting a comprehensive agreement in the future.

The women participated in a business management course, facilitated by Microfy, that consisted of 8 lessons over the course of three months. The course focused on introducing the basis of business management, defining relevant concepts and terms, marketing and branding, calculating the costs of the product and more.

Members of the collective developed a branding concept using a joint experiential process and focusing on portraying the products and the stories of the women. They created a logo and a name [C.E.C Collection], photographed and designed a poster and flyer.

A product line was created based on the idea of manufacturing recycled and self-sustainable products. To date they have produced three different sets of products: bags, wallets and dolls.

<table>
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<td>The women formed a supportive network among themselves.</td>
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<td>The women’s self-esteem, and their ability to voice their opinions and to be creative has greatly improved throughout the year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Statement-Review was drawn up, laying the foundations for the collective’s work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>An initial product line was created manufactured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The women participated in a business management course and obtained marketing and branding skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The collective produced marketing materials and branded the collective as “C.E.C Collection”.</td>
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<td>The collective sold their products and increased the members’ personal income.</td>
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8 women lead the collective.

10 marketing public event took place during the year.

15,000 ILS was the collective’s income from the previous year.

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Community in Creation - A social fashion

sales

The collective participated in a multicultural food, music and art fair where they sold their products.

The collective was invited by "Metropolis" (social artistic initiative) to conduct workshops on their doll production process (they will be paid for this).

Three stores regularly sell the collective’s merchandise.

The collective received requests from associations to produce products for them. These include, for example; Bialik Rogozin School, which ordered costumes for the children for a performance. The collective also received an order to produce meditation pillows.

The collective’s income from the previous year was 15,000 ILS

Community in Creation - A social fashion project was initiated by Angie Robles, a migrant worker from the Philippines, who decided to open a sewing center for asylum seeker and migrant women as part of the Garden Library’s Community Education Center (C.E.C). Angie is one of the founding members of the C.E.C. and is an active member of the center’s leadership team.

Angie says that she decided to open the center after hearing from a friend of hers that she wanted to learn sewing. Angie learned to sew when she was a student in school. She says: “We create products that can be sold to the general public and also for our personal use, like cloth.” She adds that she sees the center as "an opportunity for the students to increase their income.”

A cooperation with a German web-based store has been recently established. The store will sell their products.

During the Jewish holidays (October 2016) they sold their items as a ‘gift set’.

The collective participated in a marketing-event organized by the Swiss Embassy.

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**Incomes and Expenses**

### Incomes

- Foundations: ₪ 235,170
- Fund Raising Event: ₪ 242,000
- Student Fee’s: ₪ 66,700
- Private Donors: 38,000 ₪
- Tours and Lectures: ₪ 18,400

**Sub Total**: ₪ 600,270

### Expenses

- The Children Community Center: ₪ 249,482
- Community in Creation: ₪ 53,612
- The Community Education Center: ₪ 115,317
- General Expenses: ₪ 97,500
- The Cultural Center: ₪ 75,066

**Sub Total**: ₪ 590,977
We want to express our deepest gratitude for all of our donors and supporters.

THANK YOU!
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