



## Kaima Nahalal Farm

Empowering Troubled Israeli Girls & Young Women through Agricultural Endeavor

### 2021 Activity Report

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## The Organization

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Established in 2016, Kaima Nahalal, a non-profit educational farm improves opportunities and choices for troubled girls and young women and engages the larger community, especially women's groups, in the process. Through our flagship employment initiative, we empower girls (ages 15-18) who have dropped out of school or are on the cusp of doing so as well as young women (ages 18-21) whose challenges continue into young adulthood. In our care are those suffering drug/alcohol addiction, sexual abuse, homelessness, and dangerously poor self-esteem, among other challenges. Kaima Nahalal is located on land rehabilitated by our founders following decades of chemical abuse and neglect, in Israel's Northern Jezreel Valley. Tapping into nature's power to heal itself and utilizing the tool of employment, our approach successfully changes the downward trajectory of the individual's life and redirects her to normative educational and social frameworks. Currently, we operate the following initiatives:

- **Project Lavender:** Long-term employment and empowerment initiative for girls and young women
- **Safe Living:** Yearlong residential programming for select Project Lavender participants
- **Garden of Eve:** Short-term feminist farming workshops for girls and women from diverse backgrounds
- **Project Earth Care:** Short-term earth-care programming for the general community
- **Feed my Neighbor:** Vegetable donation program

Since our founding, we have employed 217<sup>1</sup> youth:

- 75 long-term (more than 3 months) – girls and young women <sup>2</sup>
- 39 medium-term (1-3 months) – girls and young women
- 15 long-term (10 months) – young women performing National Service
- 88 summer program (6 weeks) – girls and boys from our local regional council with activities led by Project Lavender young farmers

The farm is led by a multi-generational, all-women professional team of social activists, agriculturalists, and educators committed to advancing the first all-girl/women-run farm in Kaima's growing alternative educational network. We support our efforts through 1) self-generated income from Community Supported Agricultural (CSA<sup>3</sup>) sales and workshop user fees, 2) government buy-in, and 3) philanthropy.

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<sup>1</sup> These numbers do not reflect the hundreds of young people who participated in pre-army programs and high school students who again joined us throughout 2021 in the wake of the second year of the pandemic.

<sup>2</sup> Of this number some 90% who leave return to normative educational settings within 3 months; nearly all who leave upon turning 18 participate in national/military service--social commitments not remotely on their radar when we met them.

<sup>3</sup> CSA is a global social-sales platform that connects local farmers to consumers, who pay a set price for a share of the anticipated harvest. Farmers benefit from advance cash flow; consumers receive a weekly box of pesticide-free vegetables.



Project Lavender, its name selected for the plant's healing properties and biblical references, employs and empowers girls (ages 15-18) who have dropped out of school, and troubled young women (ages 18-21) who have aged-out of other treatment frameworks.

### 1. Employment programming

Throughout 2021, 20 girls and 5 young women took part in our full-time employment program. Our young farmers learned new skills and earned a salary, incentivizing them to take responsibility for themselves, the team, and the farm. Participants, as equal partners with adult staff, learned to grow, market, and sell the farm's products to our 80 CSA customers who receive fresh vegetables delivered weekly to their homes and at farmers' markets.

As part of our integrative approach, throughout 2021, we also offered lectures and facilitated discussion on body image, setting healthy boundaries, communication, and other aspects to help overcome sexual trauma. Activities took place daily, from 7:00 - 2:00. Though not part of this grant, notably, we also employed 20 local youth during our summer program in conjunction with our regional council. This activity enabled Project Lavender farmers to mentor others, practice newly acquired skills, and gain pride in the process.

As part of our employment track, we continued to encourage entrepreneurial thinking, some of it reflecting zero-waste farming principles. For example, we facilitated a workshop to develop medicinal and other natural products, such as deodorant and creams from plants and herbs, grown on the farm, and dried in our geodesic mudroom. Many of these products are now being sold to our CSA customers, thus generating both pride and a new income stream.

### 2. Complementary educational programming and enrichment activities

This track encourages self-empowerment, workplace preparedness, and personal safety, and guides each individual as she takes on new challenges beyond the safety of the farm.

**A. At the individual level:** This past year we began facilitating optional offsite certificate-granting, skill-building, and enrichment courses. Initially, five girls enrolled in a local yoga arts program designed to determine eligibility for entry into a professional instruction course. This program was abandoned owing to the Omicron variant. At present, three girls are taking voice training and one is training to be a tattoo artist.

**B. At the group level:** This past year, owing to COVID, we were again challenged to implement the majority of our planned offsite complementary educational programs. In a non-pandemic year, this would have included numerous tours of other agricultural operations outside of our region. Instead, owing to safety concerns, we limited those outings to youth exchanges with other Kaima network farms and local outings. For example, toward the end of the year, we visited another small farming community at nearby Ma'ale Tzviya to learn new gardening techniques and picnicked at Mt. Carmel. We also organized a one-day externally facilitated self-defense class for the whole team. This was a difficult experience that proved triggering for some, but something we still want to explore for the future. Our closing event, during which we bid farewell to one group of national service workers and welcomed the incoming team, was particularly meaningful.

### Summary of 2021 Project Lavender Participant Progress

8 returned to full-time high school studies

2 enrolled in Kidum Noar programming

2 joined the army

3 enrolled in national service programming

2 are pursuing professional studies

1 started academic studies

The rest are still on our team

## Garden of Eve

Garden of Eve offers short-term programming using the farm as our outdoor classroom and Project Lavender youth as our co-educators. Such programs encourage environmental activism, teach earth-care, promote shared cultural food traditions, trigger social action, and reference Jewish texts in exploring humanity's relationship with nature. GOE is dependent on both local and overseas tourism and, thus, has been more appreciably affected by the pandemic. Having said that, Israel's excellent vaccination program ushered in a slow, but steady return of local tourism. Notable outcomes follow:

### 1. Programming

JANUARY – DECEMBER 2021					
GROUPS	PEOPLE	ISRAELI	DIASPORA	EXAMPLES OF GROUPS	INCOME
14	660	96%	4%	Gardening and conservation courses for educators, students, and environmentalists; mother/daughter programming; Bat Mitzva celebrations; women-led business collectives	NIS 45,590 (\$14,250) *

\* A three-fold increase over the previous year.

**2. New relationships:** We are now involved in new important engagements with local women's groups.

- A. Moadon Haleviot:** Moadon HaLeviot (the Lioness Club) is a network that provides Israeli women with the tools, experiences, and relationships to transform their business and/or social endeavors from concept to reality. Each year the collective selects a project to nurture and support. This year they chose us and organized a crowd-funding campaign on our behalf. The proceeds (\$15,000) are helping to seed Safe Living, our new residential program for young women.
  - B. Raya Fund Fellows:** We were recently accepted into the inaugural Raya Fund Fellows program. The Raya Fund brings together women CEOs from all backgrounds who are leading social change organizations in Israel to encourage both national and local collaboration. The program is already generating new partnerships and potential funding leads.
  - C. HaAgudah Lehitnadvut (Israel Volunteer Association):** We entered into a new collaboration with the Association which facilitated a \$6,250 equipment donation through the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, the Association also mentors our staff and is beginning to hold events for its mostly women staff at the farm.
- 3. Replication:** GOE also allows us to support other professionals, both locally and across the country, in their own agricultural and entrepreneurial pursuits. We have a particular interest in assisting women who seek us out regarding the possibility of importing our feminist-farming model. During the reporting period, we assisted five groups of farmers and/or social-change leaders at various stages in developing their initiatives based on our agricultural, treatment, and/or income-generating activities. Included were those focused on working with troubled youth; IDF veterans suffering PTSD; girls/women in the process of exiting prostitution; those going through drug rehab; and others.




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## Safe Living

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***“The initiative is raising future standards of living and professional opportunities by creating an accepting, safe environment for young women in the aftermath of personal crisis.”***

In September, after much planning, we launched Safe Living, our first residential program. The initiative offers supervised housing and expanded wraparound services for young women (ages 18-21) who would otherwise be unable to participate in Project Lavender. Most are identified by the government-sponsored Tmura program, an affiliate of HaAgudah Lehitnadvut (Israel Volunteer Association), which facilitates alternative national service activities for young people who cannot be recruited into conventional civil service, including those who have suffered sexual trauma and/or addiction, as well as the previously incarcerated.

To prepare for this ambitious undertaking, we hired a part-time social worker who is highly experienced in working with girls and young women recovering from sexual and other forms of trauma. Over time, the undertaking will help the individual learn how to live responsibly by modeling a healthy home environment, thus further preparing the young person for full entry into adulthood. While we had initially intended to set up two households in 2021/22, we opted to take more time to scale yet further.

#### Sarah's Story \*

"When I arrived at the farm, I saw myself as an unstable, unreliable person, someone always running away from challenges. For so long, I'd been looking to connect to something, but kept being drawn to people and places that were risky and dangerous.

Today, after being on the farm for only six months, Nahalal's fields are my life source. If I'm stressed or conflicted, I am calmed by working the land. Being in nature recharges and helps balance me.

I was raised in a religious family and was about to turn my back on religion given my troubles. The time in the fields, the rhythm of the farm, and being with other girls like me helped reconnect me to Judaism and the blissful rest of Shabbat. Today I want to be on the farm as much as I can. It's an amazing gift to any girl who finds her way here."

*\* Not her real name*

Sarah had been living rough before we met her. She had left home at 17, had turned to drugs and alcohol, and was wandering the streets. Her integration into the farm and Kaima's new Safe Living residential initiative, a joint effort with Tmura, was exceptional to watch. She so clearly needed a loving structure and almost immediately became a great source of support to both our Project Lavender participants and our adult team. She now works full-time as our agriculture manager and leads a group of pre-army program volunteers. Sarah, having gained tremendous self-insight, is growing into a disciplined young woman, completing very complicated tasks.

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### Feed my Neighbor

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To help mitigate the problem of hunger in the community, a situation exacerbated by the pandemic, Kaima Nahalal's "Feed my Neighbor" program is allowing us to appreciably expand our long-established tradition of donating a portion of our harvest to those in need. Agricultural and labor costs are supported through direct sales to our CSA customer base and philanthropy. Prior to the pandemic, vegetable donations fed 500 people annually. This new initiative is enabling us to increase that number to 3,000 while modeling the highest principles of Tzedakah and empowering our Project Lavender farmers as responsible, empathic citizens.

Some of the local organizations benefitting from this undertaking include Bayit Baemek, a group home for young adults with cognitive disabilities; [Land Where Women Heal](#), a center for women with complex PTSD as a result of sexual violence; Derech Baemek, an undertaking that supports families in need; [Beit Hatavshil](#), an NGO that cooks hot meals for Holocaust survivors and others; and [Hiram](#), established at Kibbutz Harduf, near Tivon, as a rehabilitation center for people going through or following mental crisis.

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## Media Corner

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- **Social Media:** We were super fortunate to be assisted by VidMob Gives, the philanthropic arm of global software development company, VidMob. Over this past summer, their team worked with us to create an impactful 30-second video to help Kaima Nahalal tell our story with strong visuals and succinct language. The entire undertaking was donated to us. Enjoy it [here](#) (30 seconds).
- **E-education:** Icenter, an education organization, produces a video series to explore Israel's unique cultural heritage through the intersection of food, nature, and music. Hosts Hedai Offaim, an educator and chef, and Rona Kenan, a popular singer-songwriter, spent a day at the farm interviewing our team. Enjoy the video [here](#) (7 minutes).
- **Israel Press:** We spent a wonderful, intensive day with the team from Ynet, one of Israel's largest news and general-content websites. Hebrew speakers can enjoy reading the article [here](#).

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## Noteworthy

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The independently-run Kaima Center for Economic Development and Educational Training has been working hard to secure government funding across the Kaima farm network over the past two years. We are delighted to report that by mid-2022, Kaima Nahalal will begin to receive limited funding for the educational investment we make in Israel's youth. This is an excellent development and will help sustain our operating model as we move forward.

