



## FROM SURVIVAL TO LEADERSHIP

### **IMPACTISRAEL – Elevating Education and Lifting Lives the Village Way**

They come from around the world and right at home – Ethiopia, Former Soviet Union, Poland, France, Brazil and Israel. They come from broken lives, danger, poverty, chaos, and insecurity. They come for help, healing, and hope. They LEAVE with confidence, self-esteem, a sense of belonging and a bright future within reach. They LEAVE with an education, skills and dedication to change their lives and strengthen their community and Israel. They LEAVE with repaired hearts seeking to repair the world.

“They” are the at-risk youth impacted by the dedication and support of **ImpactIsrael** and by the innovative spirit, ground-breaking methodology and programs of our Israeli partners - **Yemin Orde Youth Village** and **Village Way Educational Initiatives**.

**Miriam Ciesler** grew up in Poland. Her family faced anti-Semitism; a neighbor set fire to their property. She arrived at **Yemin Orde** alone and without support. “I remember feeling overwhelmed, I did not understand anything, everything was very hard.” **Yemin Orde’s** counselors provided emotional support, strengthened her Jewish identity and self-esteem and she regained her academic footing. After high school, Miriam served as an IDF commander working with new immigrant soldiers. Miriam is now a university student studying education and works at Masa Israel with young people from around the world. Her parents also now call Israel home.

**Mkonet Gadamu** came to Israel from Ethiopia after a dangerous journey on foot; a younger brother died on the way. “We left everything we knew and had behind”. The **Village Way** methodology transformed his life. Graduating with honors Mkonet became a Commander in the Golani Brigade and earned a B.A. in Economics and a Masters in Natural Resources and Environmental Management. Today, he directs the **Village Way Educational Initiative’s Mechina** program for young men from complex backgrounds.

**Tamara Shein Shneor** had a difficult family environment in Iran. She arrived in Israel alone as a teenager with low self-esteem. “I will never forget the moment that I realized that everyone at **Yemin Orde** believes in me. This is a very important feeling for a child, to know that he or she won’t be abandoned.” After high school, **Yemin Orde’s** Graduate Support Program provided interim accommodations at the Village and supplies for her first apartment. After serving as an IDF Combat Engineer, Tamara studied at Bar Ilan University and is a Police Investigator in the field of domestic violence.

### **Impact Israel**

**ImpactIsrael** is the North American philanthropic partner of the **Yemin Orde Youth Village** and the **Village Way Educational Initiatives** in Israel. The mission of **ImpactIsrael** is to transform immigrant and at-risk youth into productive members of Israeli society through value-driven education and support.

**ImpactIsrael** is the central financial driver in an ambitious and inclusive endeavor to touch the lives of at-risk youth in Israel across all boundaries: religious and non-religious; Jews, Arabs, Druze and Bedouin; and youth of all colors and countries of origin. Through **ImpactIsrael’s** philanthropic support more than 25,000 at-risk youth have been touched and supported by the **Yemin Orde Youth Village**, and in the high schools, youth villages and gap-year programs throughout Israel that are part of the **Village Way Educational Initiatives**.

**ImpactIsrael** provides the pipelines of support to our Israeli partners for a bold plan of action to improve the education, health and welfare of Israel and have a positive impact on its security and society by seeking to improve the lives of 55,000 at-risk youth by 2026.

## Yemin Orde Youth Village

Founded in 1953, **Yemin Orde Youth Village** is an acclaimed haven and school for at-risk youth. Located on a 77-acre campus in the Carmel Mountains, **Yemin Orde** is home to 450 youth representing more than 20 countries of origin. Since its inception, **Yemin Orde** has been a true home away from home for more than 5,000 teenagers. The average age is 15 and the school encompasses grades 9-12.

**Yemin Orde** delivers an all-encompassing school and home within a 24/7 framework; providing each student with the individual, peer and familial environment and support needed to succeed. Through education and educational enrichment: sports and cultural arts; guidance counselors and mentors; supportive workshops; individual and group social and psychological therapy, and financial assistance, students are given a secure foundation to gain confidence, self-esteem, grow and thrive.

Special features include a working eco-farm; visual arts and music programs; Jewish and Israeli cultural programming; advanced honors-level courses and the senior class Challenge Hike (*Etgar in Hebrew*). **Yemin Orde** is one of the few youth villages that stays open to its students every day, year-round. It also offers a highly developed Graduate Support Program that provides alumni with financial and emotional services well into adulthood including care packages for graduate-soldiers, career guidance, temporary housing, networking opportunities, reunions and a “home” to hold special events and life cycle celebrations.

## Village Way Educational Initiatives

The **Village Way Educational Initiatives** was established in 2006 to scale the unique “**Village Way**” educational methodology developed at the **Yemin Orde Youth Village** to deliver educational solutions that positively impact at-risk youth, families and communities throughout Israel.

Headquartered on the campus of the **Yemin Orde Youth Village**, the **VWEI** vision is to grow a national educational movement in the spirit of the Village Way. **VWEI** works to transform struggling high schools, other youth villages and residential communities for at-risk youth, allowing educators to develop concrete solutions to apply in the field and realize their dreams for the youth in their care. Each partner institution participates in a three-year Village Way integration process of intensive training and a dedicated facilitator works together with the staff to evaluate current activities, identify strengths and weaknesses and set goals.

In addition to its work with dozens of educational partners, **VWEI** has developed and operates three distinct direct service residential pre-army gap-year leadership programs (*Mechinot* in Hebrew) to provide the tools and support necessary to prepare at-risk youth for successful and productive military service. **VWEI** also collaborates with Israel’s only juvenile prison, the IDF and the Border Police to provide trainings, and the Village Way educational methodology is taught in academic courses at several leading universities and colleges across Israel.

A biennial Village Way Educational Initiatives Conference brings together more than 700 educators from around Israel and provides them with an opportunity to connect to each other and share experiences and best practices. The conference also serves to show appreciation to the hard work of educators, inspire them and show that they are connected to a larger educational movement and not alone. In a recorded message at the 2019 Conference Israeli President Reuven Rivlin expressed his admiration saying:

*“If you look to your left and right in the auditorium, you’ll see all the diverse faces of Israeli society, Arabs and Jews, religious and secular. All sitting together, learning together, all willing to follow the same path: The Village Way. This isn’t only Israel at its best, it’s our collective Israeli hope. It’s proof that education truly leads society.”*

To date, the Village Way Educational Initiatives has partnered with 55 distinct educational communities, touching an estimated 2,300 educators and more than 18,500 at-risk youth. By 2026, the goal is to partner with 91 educational

communities in Israel, nearly doubling the number of educators to 4,100 and bringing the total number of at-risk youth helped by VWEI to over 55,000.

**Taken together - Yemin Orde Youth Village and Village Way Educational Initiatives - help Israel's at-risk youth advance from "Survival to Leadership" with an innovative and unique educational methodology.**

## **The Village Way Methodology**

Originally developed at the *Yemin Orde Youth Village*, the Village Way is a comprehensive educational methodology that serves as a blueprint for working with at-risk youth and training educators. It aims to enable youth to refocus their energies from daily struggle and survival to achieving success. It envisions graduates as self-reliant, educated participants in the workforce, part of normative families and with a sense of social responsibility.

### **The Village Way Methodology 10 Core Components:**

- **Anchors in the Past:** Recognizing and strengthening positive personal narratives, empowering communal history, and honoring cultural traditions;
- **Anchors in the Future:** Designing a plan for the future and encouraging youth to change present actions accordingly, teaching valuable life skills, providing support for graduates and letting youth know that the community will serve as their safety net;
- **Earth (the physical environment):** Creating an aesthetically pleasing home-like atmosphere, using the physical environment to convey lessons and communal values;
- **Sky (the spiritual environment):** Reinforcing communal values and national belonging, finding meaning in tradition and holidays, promoting moral judgment;
- **Tikkun Halev (repairing the heart):** Providing diverse opportunities for success in academic and extracurricular activities, providing programs for emotional healing, and using setbacks and crises as an opportunity for growth and learning.
- **Tikkun Olam (repairing the world):** Participating in community service to empower youth through helping others and serving a valued role in the wider community, promoting a sense of responsibility to service, opening up the wider world to the child;
- **Reliable Representations of Parental Wholeness:** Placing every educator in the role of a meaningful adult in children's lives, involving parents in community, empowering parents in the eyes of their children and the children in the eyes of their parents;
- **Community of Meaning:** Crafting a sense of belonging to and pride in a supportive community with common values and spreading values beyond the community's borders;
- **Dialogue:** Opening up understanding, respectful dialogue between adult and youth, aimed at promoting the youth's progress, without blurring the role of the responsible adult;
- **Minimizing institutional characteristics:** Building a living community that goes beyond the bureaucratic aspects of institutional life, on the physical and interpersonal levels.

## **Results and Illustrations of ImpactIsrael's Support:**

Influence on a person's life is hard to measure yet researchers at Haifa University conducted two significant studies (2007; 2018) that have shown the incredible success and positive impact of our work. Here are some results and illustrations of how ImpactIsrael's funding is elevating education and lifting the lives of students, educators, families, and communities throughout all of Israel.

### **Yemin Orde Youth Village Select Outcomes:**

- Higher rate of high school matriculation certificates than other boarding schools
- Higher enlistment rates for military or national service than the general population
- Higher percentage of students who continue academic studies than other youth villages
- Higher employment rate than other boarding school graduates
- Ranked by Israel's Ministry of Education in the top 4.3% of high schools in Israel that excel in academic, social and ethical achievements
- More than 5,000 graduates in careers as diverse as – IT, engineering, law/attorneys, military & police officers, educators, elected officials, non-profit leadership, health care, and a former MK.

- Village population country of origin: 33% Ethiopia; 24% former Soviet Union; 17% France; 16% Israel (native born); 8% Brazil; 2% Other (Hungary, Slovakia, Belgium, Venezuela, Morocco, UK, US.)

### **Village Way Educational Initiatives Select Outcomes**

The impact of the Village Way process is distinct for each educational community. Individual communities have reported the following:

- Reduced rates of violence and vandalism
- Reduced truancy rates, improvements in school attendance
- Reduced drop-out rates
- Ofek Juvenile Prison – significant drop in violence by guards and behavioral incidents by prisoners.
- Improved relationships between parents, staff, students
- Improved performance in vocational and/or academic studies
- More involvement in lives of graduates, and stronger connections with school graduates
- *Mechina* programs: Compared to their peers, graduates perform better in mandatory military service, rise to more leadership positions and, after army service, pursue higher education at higher rates.

### **Additional outcomes**

The Village Way is sought-after as an effective methodology in the field of academia. Additionally, Israel’s military and community leaders are turning to VWEI to provide training and support to commanders and soldiers, community leaders and civic volunteers.



### **Unmet Need – Use of Proceeds:**

With an estimated 400,000 at-risk youth in Israel, Yemin Orde Youth Village and the Village Way Educational Initiatives – the largest programs of their kind – are currently meeting just 5% of the overall need. Our core program – Yemin Orde Youth Village – is the well from which all of our work springs. A hallmark of our success – both at Yemin Orde Youth Village and Village Way Educational Initiatives - is to seek continuous improvement be it through bigger and better educational and extra-curricular offerings; expanded emotional and psychological support; upgrades to our physical plant or expanded trainings and mentoring to educators and educational leaders.

Our proven methodology and design for sharing our approach and program are both replicable and scalable and we have the vision to do so - IF we can secure the funds to generate further expansion.