



Language is Opportunity

Lissan Annual Report

September 2023

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A Note from Lissan's CEO

Dearest community,

We are thrilled to share our 2022-2023 annual report with you, summarizing our activities over the past year. This year was full of significant growth and development: we increased the scope of our activities from one project with 500 students a year in 25 classes to three core projects and a handful of smaller projects with over 1,300 students a year in 67 groups. We expanded our activities in East Jerusalem neighborhoods to over 15 locations, including Kafr Aqab and Shuafat refugee camp on the other side of the separation barrier. These neighborhoods suffer severe neglect and have limited to no access to essential services. We created new partnerships, including, among others, with the Jerusalem Municipal Employment Authority, Intel, and the Open University.

Expanding the scope of our activities brought with it growth and diversity within our staff. We grew from a staff of 5 part-time employees to a staff of 8. We invested time and resources in developing new study and enrichment materials, and developed a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plan for each project.

The statistics presented in this report show the dramatic influence our Hebrew courses have on the lives of our students, who expressed an increased sense of self-confidence and independence in navigating the Jerusalem public domain and municipal and governmental bureaucracy, better access to healthcare services, and success in integrating into the workforce and higher education. In Jerusalem today, Hebrew knowledge is more than an essential need and a basic right, it opens doors to opportunities and serves as a tool to improve the quality of life of our students and their families.

An enormous thank you to you, our partners, volunteers, coordinators, teachers, community members, and our generous donors - for believing in us and for being an integral part of our work. Our achievements over the past year would not have been possible without you.

In the current political climate, with the rise in race based violence in Jerusalem and throughout the region, Lissan will continue to advance our vision of a more equal, shared Jerusalem for all of its inhabitants. We will continue to stand alongside our students and support their right to dignity, equality, and freedom.

Yours,
Talia Vekshtein
CEO



About Lissan

Lissan-لسان (Arabic for language or tongue) is a grassroots non-profit organization that promotes gender and social equality in Jerusalem. We seek to bridge the gap between East and West Jerusalem by advancing linguistic justice and a vision of a bilingual Hebrew-Arabic Jerusalem. We do this by providing practical and accessible Hebrew language classes based on the needs of East Jerusalemite women. Our courses provide these women with the language skills necessary to independently navigate Jerusalem's public domain and access resources, rights, and opportunities to advance themselves personally and professionally.



East Jerusalem and the Language Barrier

Jerusalem is home to over **984,500** residents, approximately **61%** of which are Jewish and **39%** are Palestinian, with the vast majority of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem.

61% of Palestinian residents of Jerusalem live in poverty.

Only **47%** of Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem participate in the workforce.

74% of East Jerusalemite Palestinian women are unemployed, citing lack of Hebrew as one of the central barriers to finding employment.

73% of East Jerusalemite Palestinian women have weak to no Hebrew, versus the **28.7%** of Palestinian men who have weak to no Hebrew.

Most essential services, including healthcare and government services, are provided mainly in Hebrew, making it harder, if not impossible, for East Jerusalemites to access their rights.



Lissan's Theory of Change

If we provide subsidized Hebrew courses to East Jerusalemite women that are culturally fit and meet their needs, and if we accompany courses with information about accessing rights, employment and academic prep,



then more women will be able to confidently navigate the public sphere in Jerusalem, access rights and resources, better their socio-economic status, and find work and pursue higher education.

If we create a stable community of Jewish and Palestinian Jerusalemites working together to advance linguistic justice,



then Jerusalem residents will be able to better communicate and work together towards a more equal Jerusalem.

If we expose authorities to the realities and needs of East Jerusalemites,



then they will adapt/change the existing policies and services to fit East Jerusalemites' needs. We will work together to provide subsidized Hebrew courses in East Jerusalem that meet the needs of residents.

Medabrot Ivrit - Women Speaking Hebrew

האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM



Lissan's flagship project in partnership with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, MATI East Jerusalem, Mini-Active, the Willy Brandt Center, and more. This project aims to provide practical spoken Hebrew skills to women from all over East Jerusalem. 400 students began the 2022-2023 program year in 26 classes and 5 levels. Classes were taught by 51 volunteer teachers, in teams made up of a native Hebrew and a native Arabic speaker.

There were 26 groups this year:

17 classes

at the Hebrew University

2 classes

at the Willy Brandt Center in Abu Tor

3 classes

on Zoom

4 classes

at MATI East Jerusalem in Sheikh Jarah

Students came from:

18.0% Beit Hanina	4.8% Tsur Baher
10.5% Shuafat	4.0% Abu Tor
10.1% Issawiya	3.9% Silwan
8.3% A-Tur	3.1% Jabel Mukaber
8.3% Ras el Amud	3.1% Wadi al Joz
7.9% The Old City	1.8% Beit Safafa
5.7% Kafr Aquab	4.8% Other
5.7% Shuafat Refugee Camp	



Student's ages:

30.3% 18-29

28.9% 40-49

27.6% 30-39

13.2% 50+

Student Profile:

36.9%

Employed

18.6%

Seek employment

10.6%

Students

33.8%

Housewives



63.9% of employed women use Hebrew in their jobs, from a small amount to their entire job being in Hebrew

Data from end of year survey 22-23 (263 respondents):

76.8% were satisfied to very satisfied from their course

82.1% rated their experience as good to excellent

97.7% would recommend our courses to a friend

85.2% felt that their Hebrew somewhat to significantly improved thanks to their course

93.2% felt that the learning and classroom environments created by their teachers were comfortable and positive





94.7% felt an increased sense of self confidence and independence in navigating the public domain



86% felt that the Hebrew they learned helped them navigate bureaucracy on a daily basis



89.3% felt more equipped to navigate the healthcare system, and communicate with doctors in hospitals and medical clinics



74.5% felt that the Hebrew they learned in their course helped them better access their rights



16.3% stated that the Hebrew they learned allowed them apply to a Hebrew speaking college or university



30.4% stated that the Hebrew they learned helped them improve their function at work



12.5% stated that the Hebrew they learned helped them find a new job that required Hebrew



4.6% stated that the Hebrew they learned helped them open their own business

Medabrot Ivrit - Women Speaking Hebrew in the Negev

Women Speaking Hebrew in the Negev launched in partnership with Ben Gurion University in the Negev and Ajec-Nisped in 2021-2022, replicating the Medabrot Ivrit - Women Speaking Hebrew model for Bedouin women in the Negev region. For this project, Lissan specially adapted our textbooks and learning materials to be more applicable for Bedouin culture and life in southern Israel. This year, two courses were held in Hura with occasional visits to the Ben Gurion University campus for practice, enrichment, and experience.

Teimot Ivrit - A Taste of Hebrew



A project offering Hebrew courses to East Jerusalemité Palestinian men and women in community centers throughout East Jerusalem. This project aims to open the door to learning Hebrew by making courses geographically and financially accessible. This project is in partnership with the Municipality of Jerusalem. In the project's first year, 80% of students successfully completed their courses, and many wish to continue learning Hebrew. We currently have an over 500 person waiting list to join one of our A Taste of Hebrew courses.

In a Taste of Hebrew 2022, there were:

511

Students

in **20**

groups

in **11**
locations

with **7**
teachers

Courses were held in:

In partnership with local community centers

- Tsur Baher
- Shuafat
- Beit Hanina
- Ras el Amud
- Kafr Aqab
- Abu Tor
- A-Tur
- Jabel Mukaber
- Shuafat Refugee Camp
- Wadi al Joz
- Issawiya

Student Profile:



10.5%
Employed

20.2%
Seek employment

7.3%
Students

62.1%
Housewives

84.6% of the employed women use Hebrew in their jobs, from a small amount to their entire job being in Hebrew

Statistics from questionnaire December 2022

67.6% were satisfied to very satisfied with their course

71.5% felt that their Hebrew improved as a result of their course

88.7% stated that their course helped them overcome barriers towards learning Hebrew



75% felt more comfortable navigating trade and leisure activities in West Jerusalem thanks to their course



65.3% felt that they were better able to navigate bureaucracy on a daily basis thanks to their course



72.6% felt more equipped to navigate the healthcare system, communicate with doctors in hospitals and medical clinics



Hebrew for Employment

Lissan operates occupational Hebrew courses targeting specific population groups and professionals that require Hebrew to integrate, or as a preliminary step towards integrating into the workforce. We offer intensive courses of 180-200 hours, providing a response to the specific needs of each group, adjusting learning materials for each group. This project targets a variety of different populations and professions, including: cleaning workers, daycare assistants, at-risk youth, small business owners, computer science and engineering alumni seeking high-tech jobs, Open University students, and more. As of July 2023, 556 students have taken part, or are currently enrolled in one of our 31 occupational Hebrew courses. This project is in partnership with the Municipal Employment Authority, and other government programs and organizations.

Completed courses - 21 groups

Course levels:

7 A1 level
8 A2 level
3 B1 level
1 B2 level
1 C1 level
1 C2 level

Audiences:

7 groups of women in community centers and young mothers
5 groups of small business owners via Maof
2 groups of youth at the Inar Center in Shuafat
2 groups for at-risk youth via Yated
2 groups of daycare assistants
2 groups of cleaning workers via the Cleaning Cooperative
1 group via the Welfare Department in A-Tur
2 groups of engineers and computer science alumni

Current Courses - 18 groups

Audiences:

2 groups of Open University students
6 groups continuing students from A Taste of H
5 groups of women in community centers
1 groups of daycare assistants
1 group of at-risk youth via Yated
1 group of special needs students via Elwyn
1 group of small business owners via Maof
1 group of small business owners (Maof) and cleaning cooperative members

Course levels:

7 A1 level
4 A2 level
6 B1 level
1 B2 level



Students' ages: Students come from:

27.2% 18-29

29.0% Kafr Aqab

2.4% Ras el Amud

34.3% 30-39

19.5% Beit Hanina

1.8% Tsur Baher

24.3% 40-49

11.2% Jabel Mukaber

1.8% Abu Tor

14.2% 50+

8.3% Shuafat refugee camp

1.2% Beit Safafa

7.1% The Old City

1.2% Umm Tuba

4.7% Shuafat

0.6% Umm Lisun

3.6% A-Tur

0.6% Issawiya

3.6% Silwan

0.4% Other

3.0% Wadi al-Joz



Employment Data

17.2%

(29 students)

Employed

24.9%

(42 students)

Seek employment

10.7%

(18 students)

Students

47.3%

(80 students)

Housewives

55.1% of the employed women use Hebrew in their jobs, from a small amount to their entire job being in Hebrew

Employment profile of employed students

24.1% (7 students) work in education

17.2% (5 students) work in early childhood education

17.2% (5 students) work in healthcare

6.9% (2 students) work in the non-profit sector

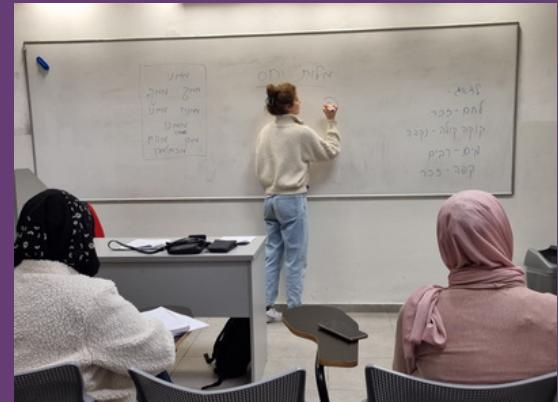
3.4% (one student) is an accountant

3.4% (one student) works in cosmetics

3.4% (one student) owns her own business

3.4% (one student) accompanies students on school buses

20.7% (6 students) other



Why are you studying Hebrew?



- 73.7% to communicate with doctors/postal workers/municipality, etc.
- 46.7% to communicate with Jews
- 32.9% to navigate the city
- 32.3% to find work
- 27.5% to pursue higher education

Statistics from end of course surveys - July 2023

79.6% were satisfied to very satisfied with their course

79% felt that their Hebrew improved some to significantly

82.6% rated their experience with their teacher as good to excellent

97.6% wish to continue studying Hebrew with Lissan



81.1% felt an increased sense of self confidence and independence in navigating the public domain thanks to their course



65.3% felt that the Hebrew they learned helped them navigate bureaucracy on a daily basis



79.3% felt more equipped to navigate the healthcare system, communicate with doctors in hospitals and medical clinics



38.5% stated that they gained the Hebrew skills necessary to apply to a Hebrew speaking college or university



38.5% stated that the Hebrew they learned helped them look for and apply to jobs that require Hebrew or open their own business

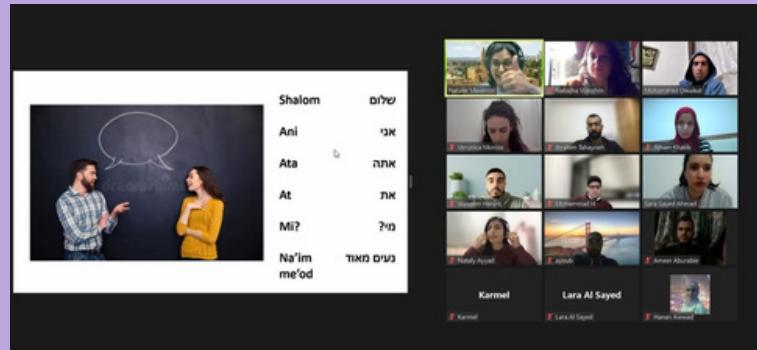


Other Projects:

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Project Aleph

Project Aleph is a unique partnership between Lissan, MEET, 50:50 Startups, and PIP that provides alumni of these Israeli-Palestinian tech projects with Hebrew and Arabic language courses. In our pilot, in partnership with B8 of Hope, we held 3 Hebrew language courses on Zoom and 1 Arabic language course in Jerusalem.

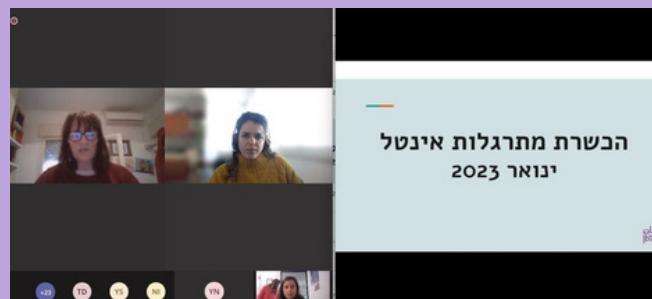


Access Your Rights

Access Your Rights is a series of lectures and mini-courses offered to Lissan students on accessing rights and government services, digital literacy, finding and keeping employment in Hebrew-speaking environments, and operating a small business in Jerusalem. This project also includes one-on-one support for students' bureaucratic needs.

Practice Your Hebrew

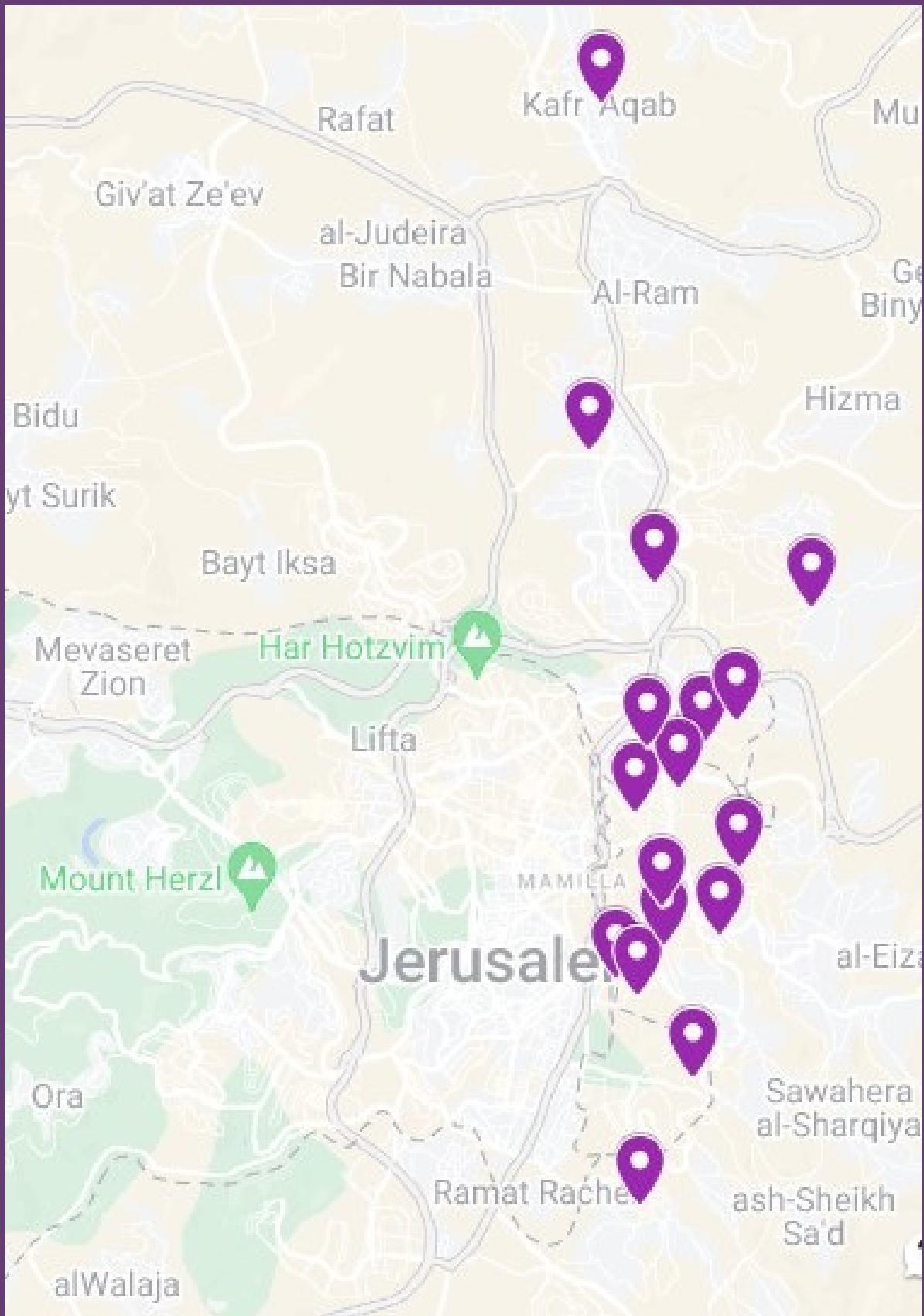
Practice your Hebrew is a project in partnership with Intel which matches mid-higher level students from Medabrot Ivrit - Women Speaking Hebrew with volunteers from Intel to practice their Hebrew one-on-one over the phone. Participants are provided with a series of predefined topics, and each conversation is followed by a practice exercise to be completed by the student, allowing our students to become more confident in their Hebrew speaking skills.



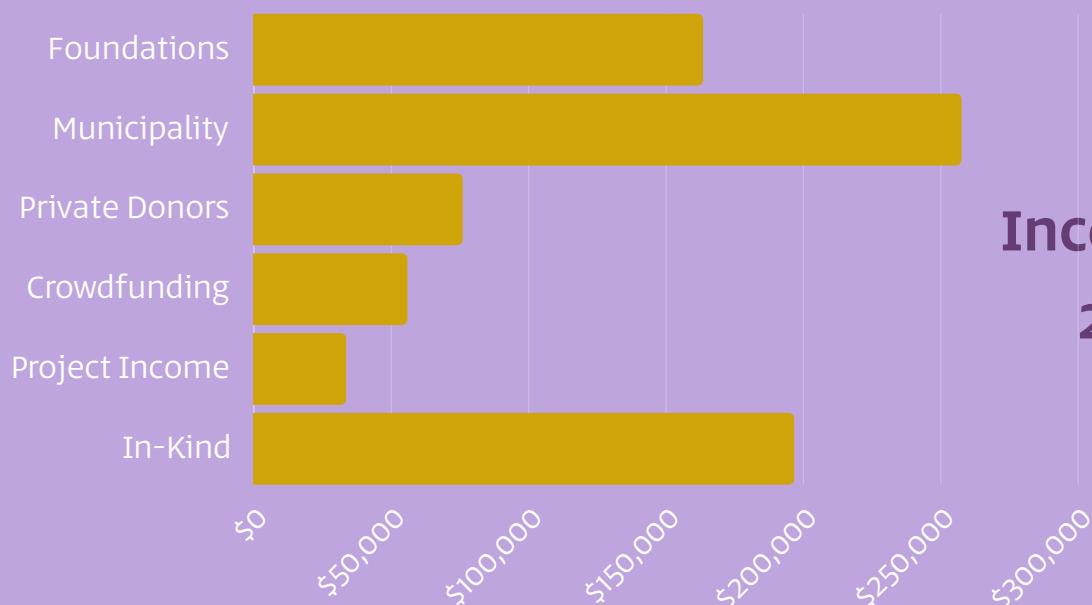
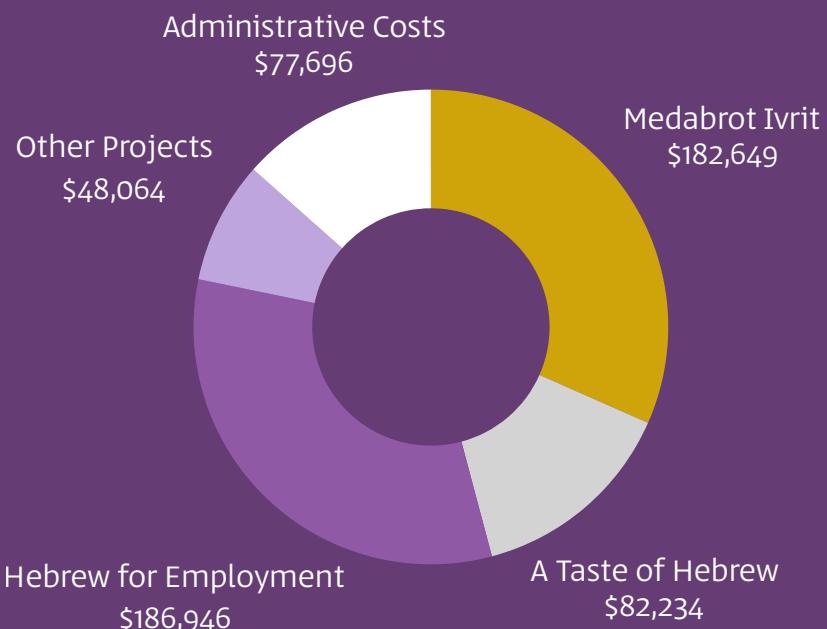
Arabic for the Community

After a hiatus, we have revived Lissan's Arabic course for members of the Lissan community. This course is heavily subsidized, participants pay a symbolic fee, because we believe that it is incredibly important for social activists and Lissan community members to be able to communicate in both Hebrew and Arabic equally, and for both languages to be equally present in the public domain.

Map of Lissan's Activities



Expenditures by Project 2022-2023



Income by Type 2022-2023

Financial Growth

2019-2022

*not including
in-kind income



Our Team



Lissan's Staff

Talia Vekshtein
CEO

Zahieh Abu Ghannam
Program Director

Aliza Schoffman Land
Director of Partnerships and
Strategic Development

Sirin Smoom
Finance and Office Manager,
Employment from A to Z Coordinator

Ronit Ben Ari
Director of Pedagogy

Avital Ende
Pedagogical Coordinator

Mina Hashemha
A Taste of Hebrew and Hebrew for
Employment Project Coordinator

Lana Halabi
Women Speaking Hebrew Project
Coordinator

Executive Board

Alumah Florsheim Dor
Chairwoman and founder

Roni Matus-Miller
Founder

Hiba Iselah

Yoni Levy
Founder

Dr. Samira Alyan

Marcia Shamo



Partners and Supporters

Our Partners



Our Supporters

Bader Philanthropies | Aviv Foundation | The Jerusalem Foundation | The Leichtag Foundation | B8 of Hope | The Rayne Trust | The Ruth and Eduard Snatager Foundation | Yad Hanadiv | Sally Gottesman | The Municipality of Jerusalem | The Municipal Authority of Employment | The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

**We are sincerely grateful for your support!
Without you, our work would not be possible.**