

## Chimes Israel's Self-Advocacy & Empowerment Program for Women & Teens with Disabilities



***In support of self-determination, self-advocacy, and self-confidence for women with disabilities.***

Chimes Israel, the sister organization of the Chimes Foundation of Baltimore, is a 31-year-old non-profit with 26 different programs throughout Israel for people with disabilities. Our caring staff of 650 professionals and hundreds of volunteers serve more than 1,400 people ranging in age from infants to the elderly, living with intellectual and developmental disabilities including autism. As the voices for those who often cannot speak for themselves, our overall goal is to help people with disabilities use their own abilities and skills to lead a life of dignity, independence and community participation.

## The Situation

As recently as October 25, 2021, the Israeli news reported a story of 14-year-old girl with special needs, who was approached on a street in Ashdod by a man in his 40s requesting computer help for his elderly sick mother. She went home with him where he raped her and locked her in his house for hours. She managed to escape after the man's mother opened the door when she returned home.

Abuse a critical issue for women with disabilities. The Ynet story of the incident, which digs deeper into the issue of abuse and disabilities, asserts that women with disabilities are ten times more likely to be sexually abused than women without disabilities.

"People with disabilities and women with disabilities in particular, are exposed to violence and exploitation of all kinds several times more than people without disabilities," explained Adv. D. Izit Gazit, Director of the legal department and advocate at Akim Israel. "Potential abusers see them as easy prey—victims who can be harmed, with a low risk of crime being discovered or prosecuted with the perpetrators."

Experts report that experiencing verbal, physical and sexual abuse is pervasive among people with disabilities because they are often in positions where able-bodied people have power over them. A contributing factor is that women themselves often lack information about what is happening to them; do not know how to protect themselves; and often choose to remain silent. The embarrassment they feel often leaves them exposed to risk, harm and abuse.

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## Program Goals, Framework & Objectives

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Designed to serve the 400 women who utilize Chimes Israel's services for people with disabilities, we developed the

program. "Self-Advocacy and Empowerment for Women and Teenaged Girls with Disabilities."

The recipients are teenagers and adult women who are integrated into their communities in all areas of life with varying levels of independence and support (light to moderate).

These beneficiaries are from all socio-ethnic groups in Israel: Ethiopian Jews, Ultra-Orthodox Jews, Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs, Modern Orthodox Jews and Secular Jews.

The program operates through facilitated groups that empower the women with knowledge, personal strategies and professional resources to enable them to avoid and escape unwelcome and harmful situations.

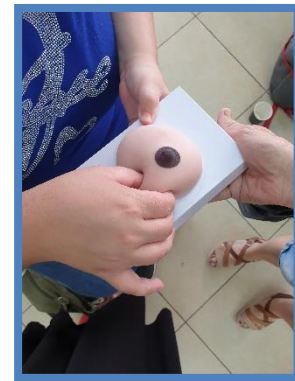
The program is critical to reducing violence against women through:

1. Educating on femininity and sexuality, as it pertains to their relationships and social circles.
2. Helping them identify potentially harmful, violent or exploitative relationships.
3. Conveying tools and skills to enhance personal protection and self-empowerment.
4. Familiarizing them with external resources that support women in abusive situations.

### **Overcoming Challenges**

To overcome the challenge of imparting this difficult and complicated subject matter to people with cognitive disabilities, our presenters are professionals with experience and training in working with this population.

We have designed the curriculum and activities for easy assimilation by people with cognitive disabilities with strategies such interactive hands-on activities using anatomical models, photos, games, and movies. We use short and simple words and repeat information. We present important information on cards in plain symbols and drawings.



We keep sessions short and frequently repeat concepts using interactive activities and visual tools. Examples are relevant to real-life circumstances. All appropriate teaching styles are used. Instead of an authoritarian attitude, our facilitators present information in a warm, kind, sympathetic and friendly manner.

## Project Strength

The strength of this project is the approach: to provide women with knowledge, then entrust them to make their own choices. The program provides women with the tools they need to recognize potentially harmful, abusive, violent or exploitative relationships, protect themselves, or seek help when necessary. Too often, caregivers and the public do not treat people with disabilities as adults with agency over their own lives. The first, foremost and only goals are empowerment and self-advocacy because we view women with disabilities as independent, responsible, adult members of society.

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In addition, our organization uses a clear project development process. We are seen as leaders in project evaluation. We measure success vs our KPIs at every level, from the standpoint of every stakeholder. Each program we operate is executed with ISO 9001's high quality standards. Midot has also accredited Chimes Israel based upon our sound program management and effective resource use.

## Program Oversight

The project's director is a senior professional in our organization who is a social worker with a specialty and background in women's and disability issues. The project manager is a social worker who observes the sessions and regularly meets with the facilitators for guidance oversee the project. Leading each group are facilitators with experience in both counseling on the subject matter and working with people with disabilities. The facilitators have received training on the program content, are following its curriculum, and meet weekly with the director for guidance.

## Key Performance Indicators

The following are the program's key performance indicators:

- KPI 1: 85% of the respondents will continue to the end of the program.
- KPI 2: 70% of participants will report a higher sense of ability and empowerment than those previously reported for intervention (pre-and after assessment questionnaires)
- KPI 3: 60% of the respondents will find a better level of knowledge of the content of the intervention than before it (before and after assessment questionnaires)

## Potential Long-Term Impact

The goal is to help shift confidence and power back to these woman and teens for the long-term. The program will help them, for their lifetimes, better understand sexuality and their bodies, and be able to recognize abusive or unhealthy relationships. By deconstructing the socialization process that creates stereotypical perceptions of

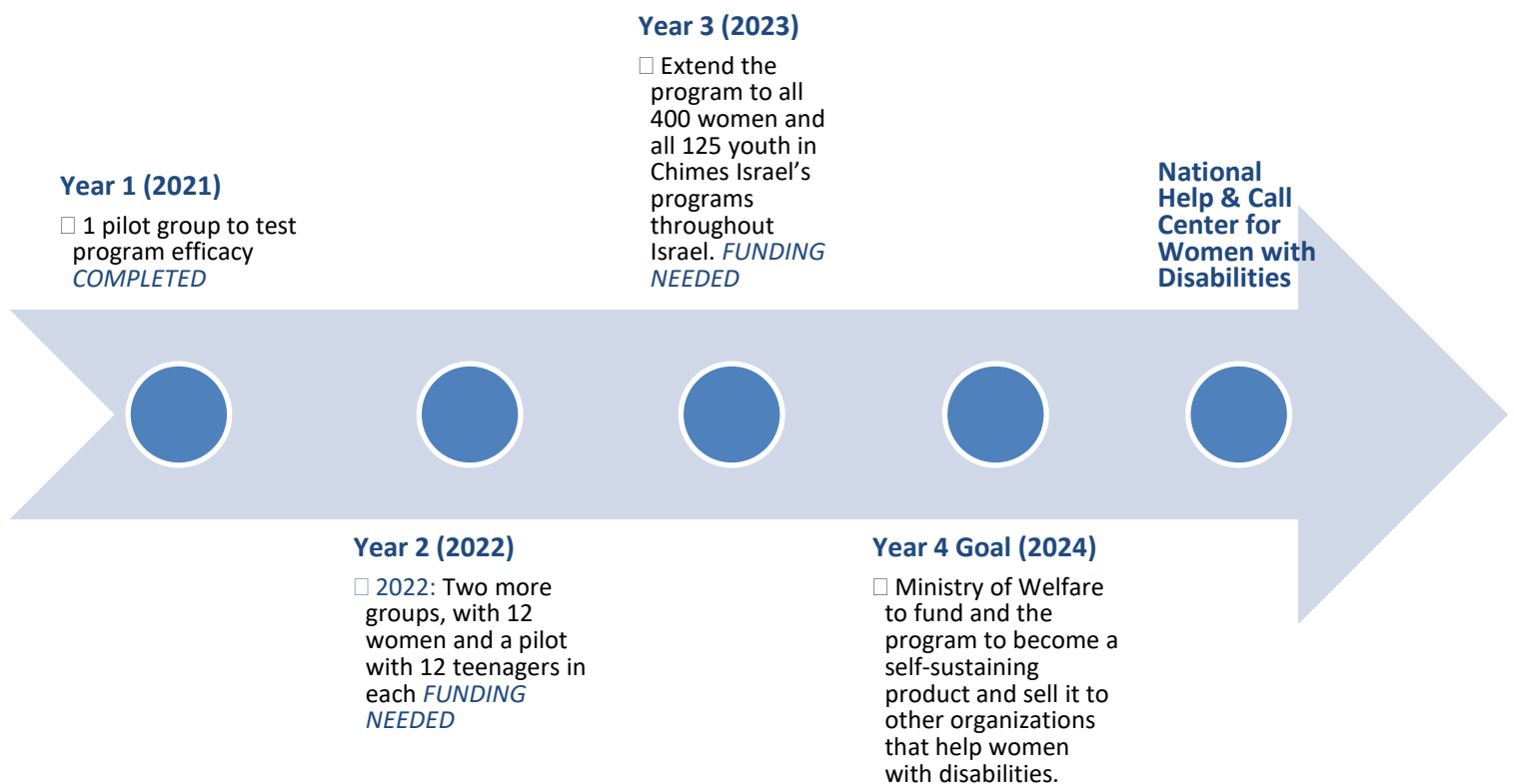


women and disabilities, we hope to empower them with the ability to reject society's values of a woman's worth and instead, believe in themselves.

## Assessment Methodology

Assessment methodology: We will ask participants to fill out a pre-intervention assessment questionnaire. During the group, the facilitators will be accompanied and guided once a week by a social worker throughout the program where issues will be noted and addressed. After the program, the participants will receive another questionnaire to assess the results of the intervention. We will analyze the data to calculate its efficacy and determine what measures must be taken to improve the program for future sessions.

## Timeline and Planned Program Evolution



## Pilot Test Program

In July 2021, thanks to a generous grant from the *L'Oréal Fund for Women*, we were able to kick-off a pilot test of the program with one facilitated group for 12 women in Rosh HaAyin. The group was guided by two facilitators who have experience in both counseling on the subject matter and working with people with disabilities. They led them through a curriculum that was written with the following goals:

- Create connections and develop a supportive women circle to stimulate discourse that raises awareness and empowers the women.
- Impart knowledge with the purpose of encouraging self-awareness and control over their lives. The subjects included femininity, sexuality, women's health, relationships and social circles.
- Raise awareness of socialization process that creates the stereotypical perceptions of women's abilities compared to men and the effect it has on us as women.
- Map the real and perceived barriers due to being a woman with a disability, the challenges that come with it, and the ability to seek assistance. These barriers prevent us from exercising our rights, integrating into society and reaching our potential.
- Provide tools for improving communication – using language that is clear and unambiguous in the interpersonal and sexual sphere.



## Learnings from the Pilot Workshop in Rosh HaAyin

Our conclusion from the pilot was all the women experienced some type of change as a result participation. Some of the changes were sweeping (seen in almost all of them), and some were expressed differently from one to the other. In accordance with the workshop's objectives for creating a change knowledge, ability and attitude, it is evident that all participants have gone through a process and are in a different place from the initial starting point.

We discovered that it was easier to impart and assimilate factual knowledge such as on women's health. Abstract subjects, such as self-empowerment for healthy relationships, were more of a challenge and we will be seeking new ways to deal with these subjects for upcoming workshops.

As to the overall goal of preventing abuse, the workshop made a remarkable impact in this area for two of the women. After a session on violence prevention and tools for identifying and dealing with dangerous situations, one of the participants contacted the director of the rehabilitation center and reported an incident of abuse that happened to her. The information was passed onto the

social worker in the group home where she lives. In parallel, she is being treated at an institute for victims of sexual assault.

A brother had beaten a participant during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Following the incident, she began living in a group home. As a result of the workshop, she told the group that she now understood that she should never be treated that way, and was ready to stand up for herself.

A very quiet, smart young woman with down syndrome, had an unpleasant experience in a special program for people with disabilities in the army. There, during a party she was laughed at (and felt humiliated) for dancing freely. Traumatized, she left the army and kept to herself in the sheltered work factory since the incident. The pilot women's empowerment workshop seemed to be exactly what she needed. She didn't miss a single meeting and participated in such a robust way that her family was astonished. In one of the sessions, she expressed that her very participation in the course was helping her confidence.

## 2022: Seeking Private Support for Women and Teenagers in Tel Aviv

This year, we will launch one group with 12 for adults in March at our center in Tel Aviv. We will also develop and launch a pilot program for 12 teenage girls/young women, ages 17 to 21, who attend our afterschool program in Tel Aviv. Here is the budget for those programs, which are in need of support.

### Women's Self-Advocacy & Empowerment Program Budget

15 Session Group	Expenses		
	NIS ₪	Euros €	USD \$
Group prep, transportation and training	6,750	1,880	2,020
Second moderator	3,750	1,045	1,122
Pre-program preparation activity	4,052	1,129	1,213
Program activity	10,500	2,925	3,142
Meals	5,250	1,462	1,571
Shuttle	10,500	2,925	3,142
Group facilitator guidance -- seven sessions	1,750	487	524
Educational equipment & materials	10,864	3,026	3,251
Unexpected - 5% of total budget	2,146	598	642
<b>Total cost of 15 week session</b>	<b>₪ 45,062</b>	<b>€ 12,552</b>	<b>\$ 13,485</b>

### Teen Self-Advocacy & Empowerment Program for Teenagers Budget

15 Session Group	Expenses		
	NIS ₪	Euros €	USD \$
Pre-program preparation activity	18,820	5,242	5,632
Program activity	27,000	7,521	8,080
Group facilitator guidance -- seven sessions	1,750	487	524
Tutor	1,755	489	525
Educational equipment & materials	10,864	3026	3,251
Unexpected - 5% of total budget	3,009	838	900
<b>Total cost of 15 week pilot session</b>	<b>₪ 63,198</b>	<b>€ 17,604</b>	<b>\$ 18,912</b>

<b>Total 2022 Budget for 1 Women's and 1 Teen Pilot Session</b>	<b>₪ 108,260</b>	<b>€ 30,156</b>	<b>\$32,397</b>
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## **2023 Goals**

In 2023, we will launch three more groups with 12 participants in each. One at our work center in the Arab city of Tayibe, which will be conducted in Arabic. One, at our work center in Tel Aviv, and one in our afterschool program for teenagers in Holon.

Based on the successful results of our KPI metrics, we are hoping that the Ministry of Welfare begin funding the program in Year 4 and extend the program to other organizations that help women with disabilities (hundreds of participants). We plan to continue the program until it reaches all 400 adult women and 125 youth in Chimes Israel's programs throughout Israel.

## **Overall Goal: National Support for Woman with Disabilities**

The self-advocacy program is just the first step in our plan to support women with disabilities who are victims of violence and sexual harm. Our overall plan is to create a national help center dedicated to the special needs of women with disabilities. This center is better equipped than those for normative women, because its focus will be to deliver the most appropriate solutions for survivors of abuse with special needs, while vigilantly protecting their right to make choices for themselves.

The goal is to help shift the power back to the survivor through the support of 24/7/365 assistance via highly trained counselors available for confidential assistance with anyone in Israel who seeks to escape abuse, resources or information, or is questioning unhealthy aspects of any relationship in their lives. It will provide crisis intervention, safety planning, and referrals to local service providers who can meet the specialized needs of people with disabilities.

## **Civic Collaboration**

We closely collaborate with the local municipalities of Tel Aviv-Yafo, Kfar Saba, Ariel, Rosh HaAyin, and Rishon Lezion on this program through the public-appointed social workers, who manage each participant's case. Each social worker works with us to understand each participant's needs in this area, given their personal history and abilities.

We also participate in a Ministries of Labor, Welfare and Social Services forum, where we share ideas and tackle problems with other organizations like ours, that strive to protect the rights and fulfill the needs of people with disabilities.

## **Todah Rabah**

We appreciate your attention and consideration. Support for this project will have a long-term impact on combating the abuse of this very vulnerable population of teenagers and women.