

***ACTIVITY REPORT for the MATANEL FOUNDATION***  
***January 2025***

**Program: AKIM Israel - Equal in Uniform**  
**Year: 2024**

Name of the report's writer: Jack Frohlich

Function of the report's writer: Director of International Relations

Mail: [jack.f@akim.org.il](mailto:jack.f@akim.org.il) Phone: +972 50-775-6620

Website / Facebook address of the organization:

<https://akimisrael.com/> <https://www.facebook.com/AKIMIsrael.Inclusion.Belonging>

**Number of active participants in the program: 120**

Estimated number of impacted participants: 120 persons ages 21-26 with intellectual disabilities or autism and their family members, approximately 1,500 officers, commanders and enlisted soldiers serving alongside the participants on 53 bases across the country.

**The actual state of the program:**

Due to the effects of the war, IDF base access was restricted, prompting continued alternative programming including evacuee assistance, volunteering, and resilience workshops for volunteers and families. Recruitment challenges persist while new recruit intake has resumed to 90% capacity. Two training programs are conducted: a two-week military integration seminar and a pre-discharge employment preparation program. The employment team receives ongoing support from social work professionals. Alumni transition to employment or higher education.

**The main achievements during the last year of activity:**

During Operation Swords of Iron (from 7.10.23 to 1.124 and from 10.7.24 to 25.8.24): the bases were declared off limits to volunteers due to security concerns. Enlisted soldiers continued their service. Despite the decreased presence on the bases, program participants received alternative programming.

The employment programs team integrated the volunteers into alternative face-to-face activities, including assisting evacuees in hotels, volunteering in the agricultural sector, and conducting face-to-face workshops at AKIM facilities, including workshops relevant for coping and acquiring tools to strengthen mental resilience. Workshops and lectures to strengthen resilience were also provided for the families.

In addition, program participants who remained at home out of fear of participating in face-to-face activities joined a digital community center with remote experiential activities for informal education and leisure.

Dedicated social workers, support staff, coordinators, and regional managers with expertise in special education and disabilities, ensured that each participant received tailored assistance and support.



IDF host bases added this year:

1. Ramat David IAF base, east of Haifa - the northernmost IAF base in Israel with fighter jets, UAVs and helicopters.
2. Michve Alon base, Galilee (near Safed) – belonging to the Education and Youth Corps, whose purpose is to integrate distinct population groups into the IDF and Israeli society .
3. Bislach South base, Negev – certifies combat soldiers in the use of advanced defense systems, training from the corporal to the highest ranks .
4. Camp 80 (Dotan Base), Pardes Hanna – home to basic training for approximately 8,000 recruits each year.
5. Home Front Command, Ramla and Nof HaGalil - an IDF district command responsible for civil protection created in February 1992 in response to the lessons of the Gulf War.

Additional highlights:

- **Extensive Support Activities:** AKIM provided a total of 19,650 activities and support services to program participants throughout the year.
- **Focus on Post-Service Transition:** A dedicated 3-month preparation program for supported employment in the open market was implemented for 40 participants, focusing on leveraging skills and confidence gained during their IDF service to facilitate a successful transition to civilian life. The program featured guest lecturers from the leadership project of Prof. Hefziba Lifshitz from Bar-Ilan University.
- **Diverse Role Placements:** AKIM continually identifies suitable IDF positions that align with participants' unique skills and interests. In 2024, participants filled diverse roles, including: call center support (new), aircraft maintenance, firefighting and runway emergency staff, text editing and printing, intelligence unit support (8200), graphic design, parachute equipment maintenance, auto garage mechanics, communications equipment assembly, kitchen staff, logistics and supply chain support, photography, and more...

**Evaluation and Future Directions:**

- Regular assessment of self-efficacy, confidence, and skill development.
- In-depth interviews to identify participants' abilities and preferences for optimal placement.
- Training in effective communication and workplace collaboration.
- Tracking the number of participants employed, type of employment, level of support required, living situation, transition to open-market employment or higher education (including enrollment in the AKIM College Program).

**Provisional guidelines for the advancement of the program in the next year:**



The focus in 2025 centers on addressing challenges and capitalizing on opportunities arising from recent circumstances, primarily the impact of the war on families and participants. The following guidelines will shape program advancement:

- **Addressing Family Concerns:** Recognizing the hesitation of some families from the south and north to enroll their loved ones, AKIM will prioritize outreach and support to these families, actively encouraging their participation in the program. This will require increased communication, reassurance, and demonstration of the program's safety and benefits.
- **Restoring Structure and Promoting Well-being:** As IDF bases resume normal operations, AKIM will focus on providing positive reinforcement to participants, emphasizing their contributions and fostering skill development. A key priority will be addressing potential social skill deficits resulting from disruptions caused by the conflict. Creating a supportive and structured environment is crucial to the success of the EIU program.
- **Maintaining and Strengthening Partnerships:** AKIM will continue its collaborative efforts with the Ministry of Welfare and Social Services and with the IDF. AKIM will strengthen its strategic partnerships with key IDF bases in locations such as Be'er Sheva, Kiryat Gat, Hatzerim, Machane Natan, Pikud Darom, and Julius Emanuel. These partnerships are essential for program implementation and participant integration.

The coming year's focus will be on rebuilding and strengthening the program following recent disruptions, prioritizing participant well-being, and reinforcing key partnerships to ensure continued success.

Please find attached: the Program Financial Report for 2024, a list of program participants and impact stories with photos.

In 2024, the EIU program was featured:

- in a new promotional video that highlighted a number of leading programs: <https://youtu.be/rvQm9qceiik?si=WSR5tUGr2F9XR5Yn> (featured on the AKIM website homepage).
- in an article in the *Dispatch from Jerusalem* magazine (June edition) published by Bridges for Peace. (attached)

**AKIM Israel is grateful for three years of loyal support from the Matanel Foundation for the EQUAL in UNIFORM Program**