

We planned to share highlights of NACOEJ activities from the past year and prepared this newsletter prior to the war with Iran. We are sending it now with the hope that the Ethiopian Israelis we serve, and all of Israel, will enjoy a calm summer, and everyone will return to their programs ready for the 2025-2026 academic year.

Ethiopia

The situation in Ethiopia has only grown worse for the Jewish community. Employment rates have dropped precipitously. Food prices have doubled. Some areas are plagued by flooding and others by drought which is making food scarcer.

And civil war, which is closer to Gondar now, has made life extremely dangerous. At NACOEJ we are doing all we can to help our beleaguered community.

Food Distributions

In the past year NACOEJ has sent tons of grain distributions to Ethiopia.



Chanukah food distribution in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Jews served by NACOEJ could not have survived without our support. They have told us clearly that the grain distributions are saving lives.

Feeding Center in Ethiopia

The NACOEJ feeding program for children under 5 and for pregnant and nursing women is now feeding 1,100-1,200 people daily, double the numbers from when the program began.

These vital programs stave off malnutrition in the children which can cause severe stunting, both in physical and cognitive development. For the pregnant and nursing mothers, the Center's food program enables them to give birth safely and be able to nurse their babies.



Mother and child at Feeding Center

New Building in Ethiopia

The Jews in Ethiopia today have been stranded there for many years. NACOEJ has worked throughout this long, difficult time to meet their needs. With all Israel is undergoing today – horrific war, political unrest, arson, and more – the ability to bring in more Ethiopian Jews to Israel right now is very unlikely.



New building in Ethiopia (artist rendering)

So, a way had to be found to help the community become more self-sufficient.

With seed money provided by NACOEJ, plans are underway to purchase a 7.5-acre plot of land close to the existing compound.

The proposal is to build an elementary school for 1,800 children, with 50 classrooms to be completed in less than two years.

After that, there will be a high school, an emergency food distribution center, and a synagogue plus an additional 2 ½ acres for a chicken farm so the community can be partially self-sustaining.

Also, rent is more affordable near the new land than in the current compound area.

students have been called up to fight this long and difficult war on two fronts.

Those on the home front have added burdens: husbands, siblings, or other relatives in combat or wounded; being displaced from their towns; and facing the threat of rockets.

Nevertheless, most of the students either graduated or remained in school.

To provide support for our hardworking students, NACOEJ created a special conference on career development in December 2024. Initial speakers, all Ethiopian Israelis, were Knesset Member Moshe Salomon, Deputy Speaker of the Knesset, and member of the Finance Committee; Avi Yalo, CEO of the Hinni Association; and David Mihret, NACOEJ Israel Director.

This was followed by a panel, whose members were Ethiopian Israelis with impressive professional achievements,

Israel

Inspiring Ethiopian College Students in the NACOEJ College Sponsorship Program

Like all Israelis, members of the Ethiopian-Israeli community experienced much hardship since October 7. A disproportionate number of Ethiopian-Israeli soldiers were killed in combat. Thankfully, students in our NACOEJ College Sponsorship Program (AAS) were not among them. However, many AAS



AAS career development conference

including one who received a NACOEJ College Sponsorship for a dual degree in Law and Psychology.

Finally, there was a talk by Tali Samani, also an Ethiopian Israeli and a practicing clinical psychologist and doctoral student in psychology at Ben-Gurion University. She is a consultant to senior managers, teaches at Achva College and lectures regularly.

In an aside: AAS students often write to their sponsors and vice versa. We thought you would enjoy reading this letter from a female student (one in five combat soldiers in Israel is female):

I'm happy to share that I've recently completed my last round of reserve duty. I serve as a combat soldier in the IDF's Search and Rescue Brigade. This was a particularly intense two-month period that overlapped with my university exam season. At the same time, I continued working as usual. Since my work is educational, I didn't feel I had the privilege to disconnect from my students or be unavailable to them, even during reserves.

Expanding Educational Programs for Towns Bordering Gaza

This year NACOEJ created an educational reinforcement program for Ethiopian-Israeli middle and high school students in Sderot and Kiryat Gat. These towns have high concentrations of Ethiopian Israelis who were heavily impacted on October 7 and continue to be by the ongoing war.

Students in these towns did not return to their regular schools until the end of the 2023-2024 school year. Before that, it had been impossible to organize help for them as they were studying on-line or in temporary schools. Now we want to help them make up the time they lost so they can achieve high matriculation scores in math, English, and science.

Thanks to a partnership with the 8200 Association (graduates of the elite IDF intelligence where few Ethiopian Israelis have served) we have added entrepreneurship and technology.

The students are being exposed to high level technology to prepare them for the army, so they have a chance to enter 8200 or other IDF technology units. This will help them join the Israeli high-tech sector after they complete their military service and higher education.

NACOEJ AAS Students Help Save Farmers in Israel from Financial Ruin

Before the tragedy of October 7, 2023, farmers in Israel relied on workers from Thailand, Gaza, and the West Bank. After the war broke out, some of them were murdered by Hamas and some taken captive.

Remaining workers from Thailand left and workers from Gaza and the West Bank were not allowed into Israel.



NACOEJ AAS students helping farmers in Israel

To help save the farmers from financial ruin, many Israeli citizens began volunteering to help. That included NACOEJ staff who then recruited help from our AAS scholarship students. Staff and students joined together to do their part in the war effort and made a difference for the struggling farmers.

Middle School Limudiah: Rising to Excellence

In addition to our Limudiah, which is normally focused on lower grades, NACOEJ has created middle school Limudiah programs for Ethiopian-Israeli students with academic potential in Jerusalem and Lod.



Student in Rising to Excellence program

The goal is for these students to be accepted to prestigious high schools and graduate with high quality matriculation exams. This is to help them go on to acquire degrees in prominent fields in universities.

The program has achieved great success, and the

students have been well prepared.

There has been positive feedback from the students, the school administrators, as well as the local authorities.

Passover in the Limudiah 2025

In Rehovot, the NACOEJ Limudiah program partnered with the Ethiopian Community Center to run the after-school educational programs three days a week.



Limudiah children at model Passover seder

This year, prior to Passover, the Limudiah held a parents and children Passover seder.

Like the four children in the Haggadah, Limudiah students in Rehovot and in other schools were asked to consider questions on their minds, then discuss them as a group.

The children also went on an imaginative journey in which they tried to discover why we ask questions at the seder.

Printed updates on the situation of Ethiopian Jews in both Israel and Ethiopia are mailed periodically. If you wish to receive email updates more frequently, please include your email address on the enclosed reply card.

All of us at NACOEJ
pray for the swift
release of the
remaining hostages
and for peace in Israel.

LIFELINE • SUMMER 2025



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