

# A War on Two Fronts:

## Status-less Infants and Toddlers Living in Poverty

“Unitaf”, an initiative of the Fund for Social Involvement, provides supervision and guidance to status-less caretakers who manage educational frameworks for children in the community.

A status-less family is defined as such when neither of the parents hold Israeli citizenship. Life without citizenship presents many challenges, situations of distress and crisis, and makes family life particularly complex.

These families face a constant struggle to fulfill basic necessities such as food and medical treatment. Families at risk are barely able to survive or make ends meet. At Unitaf we have set ourselves the goal of providing families with support, guidance, and assistance in every way we can. In this report, we review the situation of families eligible for a tuition assistance scholarship.

This year Unitaf was home to 1,320 status-less children ages 3 months to 6 years. Of those are a group of 470 infants and toddlers (3 months - 3 years).

**This report provides a comprehensive picture of the situation of 102 infants and toddlers in Unitaf living in poverty who are entitled to a tuition stipend.**

## Bridging the Gap: Tuition Assistance Scholarships

One of the main tools for helping financially struggling families is a tuition subsidy in form of a scholarship. The scholarships are granted to us as part of the funding of the "Early Childhood Framework" program, a government decision 2487 to strengthen support and care services for infants and toddlers of those without status in Israel.

The scholarship helps keeps the child in an appropriate educational framework, which in turn allows the parent to work and support the household. Additionally, it allows our social workers to monitor the familial situation of the child and accompany the family throughout periods of crisis until the difficulty is solved. Families with chronic difficulties will receive scholarships throughout the child's stay in the home. Others will receive temporary and regular assistance until a solution or benefit is found in their situation.



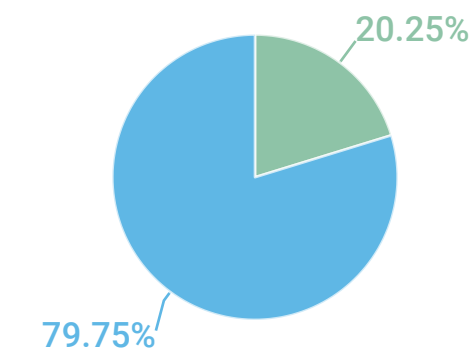
22% of Infants and Toddlers in Unitaf live in poverty



... (signatory countries are) Convinced that the family, as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children, should be afforded the necessary protection and assistance so that it can fully assume its responsibilities within the community, Recognizing that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding, ...

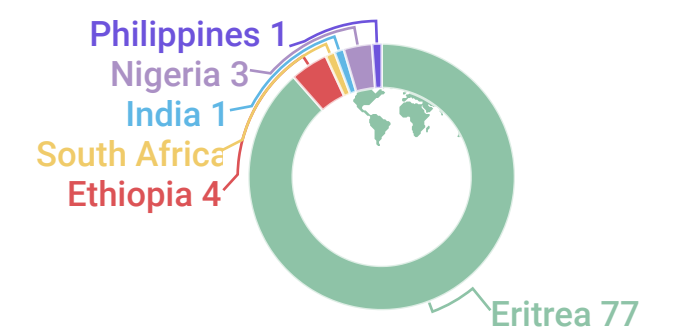
*The United Nations, Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989*

Household Status



- Single Parent Households
- Two Parent Households

Country of Origin - Parents  
Absolute Numbers



- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- South Africa
- India
- Nigeria
- Philippines

# A War on Two Fronts:

Status-less Infants and Toddlers Living in Poverty

## Tuition Assistance Scholarships Process

In order to receive financial assistance, the family's needs and circumstances are examined and monitored monthly by both the scholarship committee and the social worker of the particular educational framework. The scholarship committee includes a social work team, the department head, and, if necessary, additional input of the educational staff in the framework. The committee examines the family's ability to pay the tuition fee, the resources at their disposal, and cooperation in the treatment process.

There are many circumstances that cause economic difficulties. We gathered the stories of the families and divided the circumstances into three groups:



**Economic:** Examines job instability and single income homes.



**Child Welfare:** families with special needs, health problems, or other disabilities that make it difficult to care for the child.



**Psycho-social Status:** Describes parents who are HIV +, human trafficking survivors, suffer from mental health issues, have an existing medical issue or disability, or households who suffer from domestic violence.

**It is important to note that many of these circumstances are not mutually exclusive, and oftentimes go hand in hand.**

For example, a parent suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (psycho-social cause) will find it difficult to maintain a permanent job (economic cause).



**Economic**

"A" is a mother of two children, both in Unitaf. She is a human trafficking survivor and has recently been hospitalized for severe depression. As a result of the torture she has experienced in Sinai, she suffers from emotional and mental trauma that make it difficult for her to maintain a stable job. Her husband is therefore the sole breadwinner of the family.

68%

of families who receive scholarships live on one income

44%

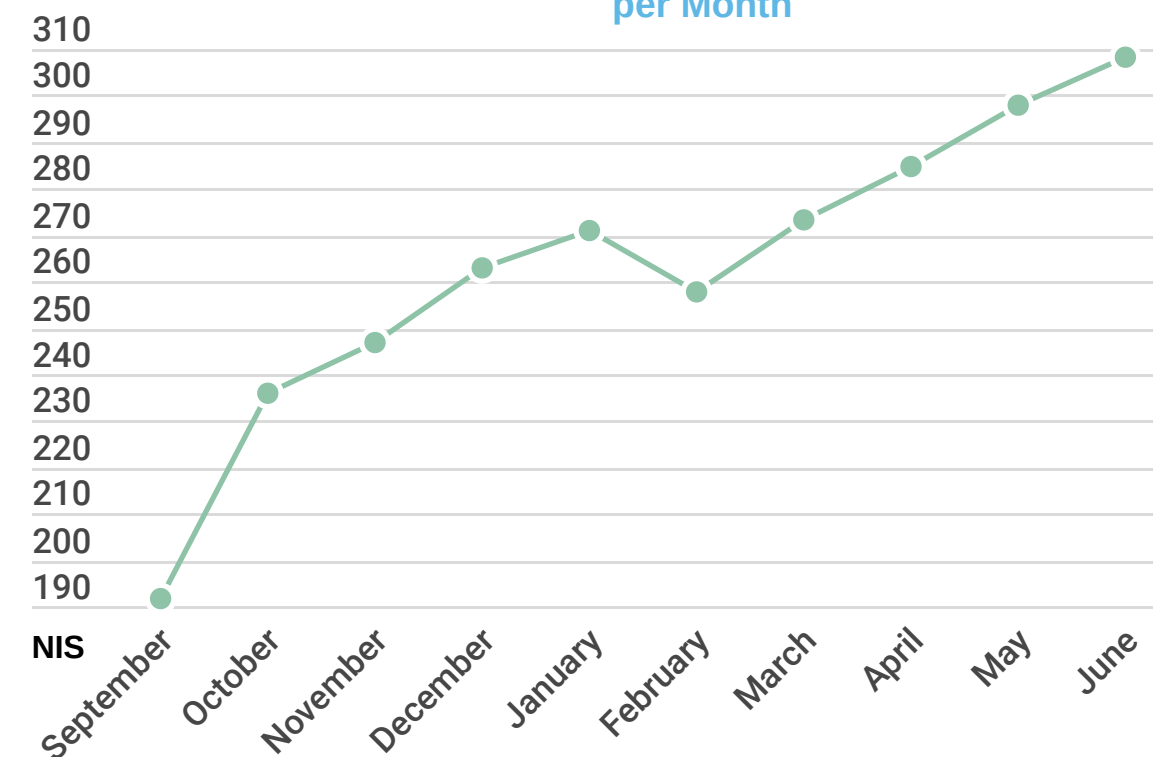
of families who receive scholarships reported suffering from \*job instability

\*Job instability is defined as difficulty finding a stable job, and working odd and one-time jobs as they come.

48%

of families who receive scholarships are two income households who do not earn enough to cover basic living expenses

Average Amount of Scholarships per Family per Month



The average number of scholarships increased throughout the year.

Each month, the number of families receiving scholarships continue to grow.

# A War on Two Fronts:

## Status-less Infants and Toddlers Living in Poverty



### Psycho-social Status

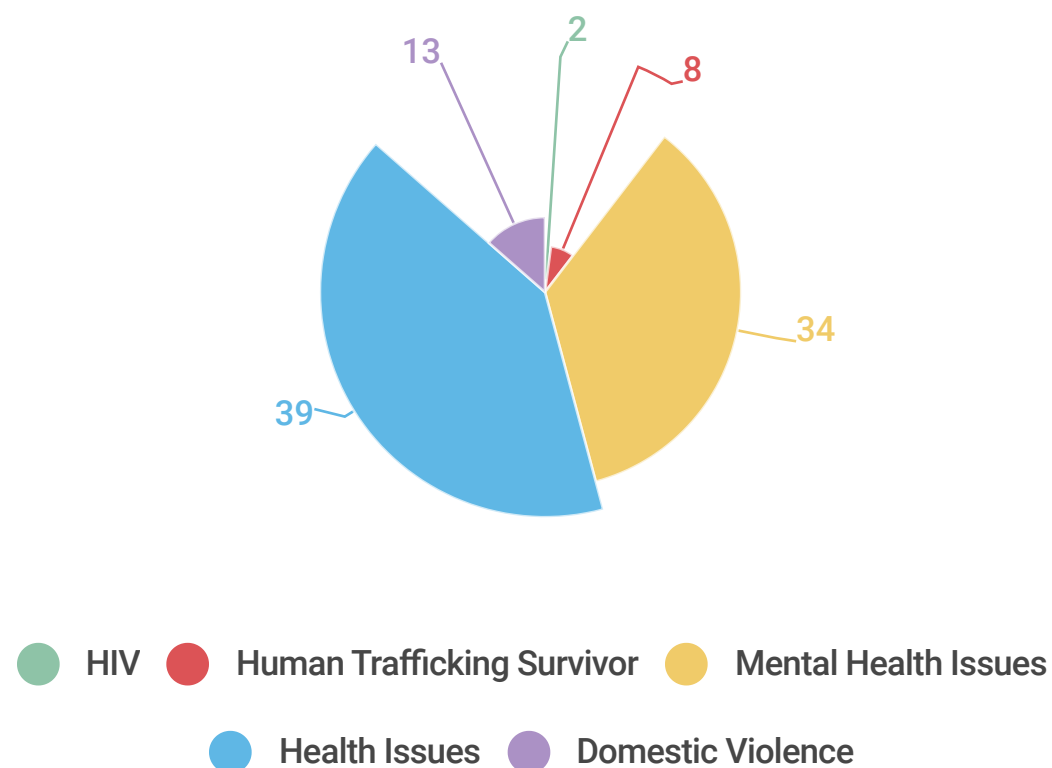
This data group represents mothers and fathers who, due to severe difficulties, are unable to maintain a job or support the household. These include disability, chronic illness, and mental or cognitive impairment. Since these families do not have any other support framework, such as Social Security, disability benefits, or extended family, the burden of caring for the family falls on a single parent who is responsible to both support his children and take care of the spouse.

- **The data shows that mental and physical health are the main reasons for economic difficulties.**
- **The National Health Law does not apply to asylum seekers, and therefore they are unable to access health services in the community**

\* Physicians for Human Rights [Report](#), 12.12.2018

### Psycho-social Status - Division

(Absolute Number of Circumstances)



### Services, Needs, and Gaps

With limited resources at our disposal, we make every effort to support these at-risk families. However, our work is far from over. Our social workers provide ongoing support throughout the year and raise additional donations and resources for the families.

In the past year, our Social Work Division launched “Resilience Plan”, a program aimed at recruiting professionals for Unitaf’s volunteer base and expanding the therapeutic services provided to families.

The difficulties and daily stresses are increasing, putting more parents and their children in crisis. The Deposit Law, which imposes a huge fine on labor income, still applies to most families and add additional economic burden. Any support at Unitaf will help us reach more families and give more to those who need it most. Help us reach them.

For more information, contact Ofira Ben Shlomo, CEO, at [ofirab@unitaf.org](mailto:ofirab@unitaf.org)



### Child Welfare

**26% of families who receive scholarships have a child with special needs or complex health issues.**

Parents of special needs children, or those with complex health problems face challenges in combining the need to care for children and cope with the labor market. More often than not, they are absent from work following hospitalization, medical appointments, surgeries, and complications. In many cases parents have to face an impossible choice between their livelihood and their child’s care.

“M”, age 2, came to Unitaf after spending time at a Child Warehouse (an overcrowded and unsafe babysitter). As soon as he arrived at Unitaf, he was identified as having Down Syndrome. His diagnosis process at the Child Development Institute lasted for ten months. During this period, his mother accompanied “M” to frequent doctor appointments and placement committee interviews. Her many absences have hurt her work and led to her dismissal.

