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This story is presented with the intention to raise awareness and provide information about ELEM’s work.

**Hosts: Ran Binyamini and Yigal Gueta**

**Guest: Tali Erez, ELEM-Israel’s CEO**

**Ran:** To conclude today’s show, we’d like to discuss what’s going on with the youth as a result of this war. Tali Erez, ELEM-Israel’s CEO. ELEM is an association for at-risk youth. Hello, Tali.

**Tali:** Hello, good evening.

**Ran:** How has this war been affecting you?

**Tali:** Look, first of all, I heard Tzachi [who spoke right before Tali’s interview – ELEM USA] and I hear a lot of pain and frustration and I think we’re going through another tough evening, and I think of the kids of the evacuees who relive trauma every single evening, what it does to them every time they hear an explosion. How do they recreate the place where they are, and where can we come in?

**Yigal:** It can mean that youth, youth who’ve been normative to this point will become, what, under the definition of at-risk youth?

**Tali:** So, yes. I can say that when people like you and I hear about “risk” what comes to mind is youth from broken homes, youth in prostitution, addiction to drugs, but risk is risk, and ELEM’s specialty is treating traumatized youth, and it’s true that all at once thousands of youth were suddenly brought under this umbrellas, and I’ll say kids, even, because a kid in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, or 8<sup>th</sup> grade is a kid, and they are now on that platform of risk. Out of the trauma they experienced, and the loss of control...

**Yigal:** As a result of what? As a result of videos they’ve watched? As a result of the media?

**Tali:** Let’s start from the basics. The southern region evacuees, thousands of youth experienced the trauma at home. In Thursday, I was at...

**Yigal:** Yeah, that, of course, but that’s not what we were talking about. The question is – is this phenomenon much wider as a result of what they’re hearing, what they’re seeing?

**Tali:** Both. There’s a risk continuum here. The highest level is basically those same kids who were there and felt like they were saved. They still haven’t processed the loss. They unpack this like it’s a suspense movie. I think that we’ll only see the consequences of that in a month or two. There’s the second tier, youth who heard of people who were hurt but weren’t hurt themselves, and they, too are still sort of processing. And then there are my kids, for example, and I live in Central Israel, who see those videos,

and are on TikTok, and experience this thing and what it does to them. Each based on their own resilience and locations have their own level of risk. We, at ELEM are currently dealing with both these ends. The demographic that that is at-risk to begin with and this is a trigger, and the demographic of youth evacuated from the Envelope [The Gaza Envelope, the area surrounding the Gaza Strip – ELEM USA] that are currently very vulnerable.

**Ran:** So could you give us some examples from that demographic you're now seeing?

**Tali:** So, I can share that we've been visiting and meeting evacuated youth for almost three weeks, starting the first Tuesday after that Saturday. And it starts with disconnect, meaning they're really in some sort of a shock; they have this slightly empty look in their eyes. And this last Thursday it was mostly youth who feel like they were in a movie, or in an Avatar video game, and they reconstruct the action they experience and as they do so, someone will randomly say "yeah my sister was murdered here" and "my father was part of the on-call force [that most Kibbutzim have for protection and are made of Kibbutz members– ELEM USA] and he was the first to die," and "what penetrates better, a rocket or an RPG?" And there are no parents there. There are very tired parents who are themselves experiencing a great lack of control. So it's 1 AM, or 2 AM, and you see tens of kids. And you wonder what's going to happen with them, now, but also in a month, and in five years. And the phenomena go from not eating, through sleeping disorders, to issues with functionality, and what we're trying to do, and it's important for me to note that we do so **with** the Ministry of Welfare, because the Ministry of Welfare is also trying to maintain control in these places and first and foremost be there, be a responsible adult, a big bother, someone who isn't scared away by the horrific stories. Not to conduct therapy at the moment, but...

**Yigal:** And are there also issue of youth who, as a result of what they experienced, what they've seen, develop some sort of violent tendencies, towards friends? Towards family?

**Tali:** This is a very fitting comment. There are two main things here. One, there's a lot of anger and rage that they don't know where to channel and it can manifest as vandalism, or a very short fuse when it comes to violence. We're talking about a Kibbutz which has the kibbutz kids and it's their home and suddenly they're hosting a very large group of children and it's a powder-keg, and it can be violence, or self-protection, let's say the issue of sexual violence, of lack of supervision. You have hotels with a whole floor for youth, of parents in one room and multiple youths in another, and we've seen stories like this before.

**Ran:** Tali, we need to wrap up, we have less than a minute left, but I want you to use our platform for anything you might need - funds, donations, volunteers. What are you lacking in order to help the youth?

**Yigal:** A phone number for people to reach out to.

**Tali:** First of all, thank you. I can share that we're establishing additional teams to be in as many places with displaced youth as possible. We're looking for staff and volunteers, professionals who are capable of doing this, I'll give our phone number for the listeners [Tali recites phone number – ELEM USA] or on

our website. Um, we're currently in eight locations and aim to be in about 20 locations across the country.

**Ran:** Crucial. ELEM. Tali Erez, the CEO, thank you very much.

**Tali:** Thank you, have a quiet evening.