



# Kuchinate 2019 Annual Report

“What Kuchinate is doing, taking care of the global community, is a symbol and a lesson for all of us...  
How we respond to human migration will be the story of our humanity.”

- Canadian Ambassador Deborah Lyons

Kuchinate  
African Refugee Women's  
Collective in Tel Aviv

קוצינטה  
קולקטיב פליטות  
אפריקאיות בתל אביב



## A Message from the Founding Directors of Kuchinate

2019 began after the tragic murder of **Silvana Tsegai**, our youngest member. The Kuchinate community worked to honor her memory, speak out against violence against women and girls, show the beauty of African culture, and amplify the strength of women.

— This year of accomplishments is dedicated to her. —

The situation for asylum seekers in Israel was challenging in 2019. **The lack of access to basic social services and healthcare was a continuing source of uncertainty, hopelessness, and helplessness for our community of women and children.** These pressures exacerbate pre-existing traumas for many of our women who share backgrounds of privation, torture, and trafficking endured prior to and during their journeys through the Sinai.

Kuchinate responded to the increased needs of our existing community, as well as the many new women who joined us in 2019 due to their difficult situations. We strive to meet the challenges of ensuring **economic, social, and psychological empowerment** for all of our women, who are among the most vulnerable in our society, many with physical and mental health issues, mothers of children with illnesses and disabilities, or single mothers. Furthermore, we constantly face the current reality that many of our women are at significant risk of homelessness and destitution if we do not succeed in our mission.

Kuchinate is extremely proud to report some key highlights and achievements of 2019 in the following Annual Report. What sets Kuchinate apart and drives

our success is the many good people who we have had the good fortune to meet along the way and who have become part of our **Kuchinate community**. We greatly appreciate your support and look forward to walking together with you on our journey as we continue to survive and to thrive and to remember that **we were all once refugees**.

We look forward to your continued support and friendship in 2020.

Wishing a blessed 2020 to us all,

Sister Aziza and Diddy

*(Sister Azezet Habtezghi Kidane, Dr. Diddy Mymin Kahn)*







Ambassador Deborah Lyons by Dani Schoffman, the Canadian Embassy

## Social Empowerment

Social Empowerment reached new heights, with women speaking out and sharing their stories bravely in the media and with visiting groups. Kuchinate's women contributed to the public discourse on challenges confronting African asylum-seeking refugees in publications such as *The Calcalist*, *Xnet*, *Luxiders*, *Ha'aretz*, and *The Jerusalem Post*.

We worked hard to expand our **public engagement**. We held our first-ever Rosh Hashana outreach event in honor of **Canadian Ambassador Deborah Lyons** for her commitment to supporting women and refugees

around the world. Several hundred people attended, including members of the diplomatic corps, business leaders, and Israelis, Americans, and Canadians, many of whom had never before visited Kuchinate. Our women presented the Ambassador with a beautiful basket honoring Canada.



Ambassador Deborah Lyons by Dani Schoffman, the Canadian Embassy

## Educational Outreach

We expanded our educational outreach by welcoming over **175 visiting groups** from Israel and abroad. Over **3,500 visitors** had face-to-face encounters with African asylum-seeking women at Kuchinate, learning their backgrounds and stories, as well as seeing first-hand their strength and courage. Every visitor helps to support our mission to educate and advocate for the interests and well-being of the African asylum-seeking community.

Groups came from as close as Tel Aviv University and Herzliya and as far as Australia, California, New York, and Sweden.

Organizations including Hillel, AIPAC, FIDF (Friends of IDF), Taglit/Birthright, Jewish Federations, JCRCs (Jewish Community Relations Councils), family groups, synagogue and church groups, and more joined us to enjoy a **traditional coffee ceremony** and see **Kuchinate artisans at work** creating their beautiful products.

Thank you to the tour operators who are now bringing groups to us regularly. These visits are a powerful tool and we appreciate your support!





## Economic Empowerment

In 2019, we laid the groundwork for new products and sales channels to increase Economic Empowerment.

As the number of asylum-seeking members grew from 260 to 325 women this year, we worked diligently to increase sales so that all of our women can support themselves and their children. Kuchinate is a place of last resort for many of our women, shielding them from homelessness and protecting them from a life of prostitution.

Thanks to over 50 women who hosted home sales, embassy sales, craft-market sales, and, most

importantly, our supporters who brought friends and relatives to visit Kuchinate, we are proud to report a self-generated income of approximately \$200k and sales of over 9,000 products (baskets, purses, books, and dolls).

This allowed us to provide economic empowerment to additional women who were in desperate need of assistance.



Photo credit: Meged J. Gozani

To offer more variety, expand our sales, and help our women develop additional skills as artisans, in 2019 we launched **New Products for New Futures**. Through artistic collaborations with local artisans, we created new products, including books and purses with African fabric and dolls that reflect the women's heritage. Thank you to **Tali Ben-Sira, Noa Vidman, and Laura Lee Burch** for partnering with us to design and produce these beautiful new products, already in high demand. Thank you to the **German Embassy** and the **United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR)** for making this possible through their generous support.



Photo credit: Meged J. Gozani

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## Art & Kuchinate

Art by the asylum-seeking women of Kuchinate has received national recognition for the first time in Israel. Working with Israeli artist Gil Yefman as part of the exhibit **Kibbutz Buchenwald**, Kuchinate women crocheted side-by-side with 250 Israeli volunteers to create a work entitled "**Hedgerow**". This is the first piece of art acquired by the Tel Aviv Museum of Art for its permanent collection created by asylum-seekers.



Collaboration with Gil Yefman Photo: Elad Sarig



Kuchinate draws attention to the plight of asylum-seekers and enables the Israeli public to consider these issues through art collaborations with well-known Israeli artists. Art collaborations empower Kuchinate women to be seen – and to see themselves – as positive, creative forces in society. Kuchinate has participated in many highly successful art collaborations in 2019 with our art being exhibited at several premier venues.

Our inspiring mosaic, **We Were All Once Refugees** continues to be displayed proudly on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv. Kuchinate collaborated with **Haitian Voodoo artist, Madam Moreau** on an exhibition at the African Studies Gallery. Painter **Zoya Cherkassky** and artist **Gil Yefman** assisted the women in illustrating their ideas on canvas.

Kuchinate was a part of the **Open Studios at Fresh Paint 2019** in Tel Aviv, exhibiting felt works in collaboration with artists Gil Yefman and **Laura Lee Burch**. Working with Gil Yefman, Kuchinate's members crocheted life-sized baskets telling their own life stories and the challenges they face as refugees in **A Body of Work**, part of **A State of Extremes**, a new and comprehensive exhibit at **Design Museum Holon**. This exhibit has educated thousands of visitors about the life extremes experienced by African asylum-seeking women living in Israel. These exhibitions and art collaborations were made possible with the generous support of the **Malka Fund NY**, the **African Study Gallery** and the **Tel Aviv Municipality**.





## Creative Partnerships

We forged creative partnerships to meet critical gaps in public social services and continued to work to provide our women with psychosocial support. In collaboration with a research group from the **University of Haifa**, we provided **mindfulness training** to our women as an additional tool to help them in their ongoing recovery from trauma. In collaboration with **Mesila**, an organization that provides psychosocial support, we provided information on healthy relationships. An asylum-seeker from Kuchinate trained the women in sexual violence prevention, sharing her own personal experience.

In partnership with **Wolfson Hospital and Tel-HaShomer Hospital**, we provided our women with information on the Israeli health system, including accessing health insurance, dealing with behavioral disorders, and maintaining a healthy diet. A certified medical translator provided the information in Tigrinya, the language of Eritrea, spoken by most of our women. This project was funded by the generous support of **Keren La'Isha (Fund for Women)**.

This year, with generous support from an anonymous European donor, we were able to expand and further professionalize our **psychosocial support team**. Our team provided professional, **culturally-appropriate, and spiritual psychological support** to survivors of human trafficking, in the warm and familiar environment of Kuchinate, where the women feel comfortable and safe.

To better meet the needs of the women of Kuchinate, we opened a **childcare area** so the infants and

toddlers of Kuchinate have a safe, supervised place to spend time while their mothers crochet baskets and create crafts nearby.

We also started an **after-school arts project**, engaging older children in creative activities with neighborhood artists. This provided a safe place for children after school and a way for them to express themselves through the arts.



While opportunities for resettlement are extremely rare, they offer a ray of hope for women, and we sustain this hope by assisting the UNHCR in the **resettlement process**. This year, two Kuchinate women, **Azieb** and **Tsegereda** moved with their families to the United States. Though we were sad to see them leave after everything we have been through together, we are happy for the new future awaiting them.



Thanks to our generous supporters and volunteers, we were able to keep our doors open to help Kuchinate women, who have nowhere else to turn.

### Thank you to:

- ▶ Manos Unidas
- ▶ ATZUM Justice Works
- ▶ Anon Foundation
- ▶ Prima Spes
- ▶ Ezrah Charitable Trust
- ▶ Clore Israel Foundation
- ▶ Anonymous Foundations in Texas, Massachusetts, Europe, and Australia
- ▶ The German Embassy
- ▶ The Good People Fund
- ▶ The Goodman Foundation
- ▶ Kavod Tzedakah
- ▶ Keren L'Isha (Fund for Women)
- ▶ The Malka Fund NY
- ▶ The Newton Centre Minyan
- ▶ The Rayah Fund
- ▶ The Sherman Foundation
- ▶ The Shapiro Foundation
- ▶ The Thomases Family Endowment of the Youngstown, Ohio Jewish Federation
- ▶ The United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and
- ▶ Thank you to all of our individual supporters, as well!

To meet the demands of our growing community of women, we welcomed **Berahti Somon Youhanas**, **Eden Gebre**, and **Michal Zakut** to work on design, quality control, and product development, and **Rachel Gutman** as our new Director of Development.

We strengthened our Development Committee including Julie Fisher, Anat Kliger, Sandra Weil, Elana Ben-Haim, Hila Arnon, and Marka Peterson.

Our management team continues to comprise 50% asylum-seekers, as we empower Kuchinate women to expand their skills and confidence.

In addition, we welcomed **over a dozen new volunteers** who graciously contributed their time and skills in childcare, new product development, fundraising, and administration, helping Kuchinate to go from **strength to strength**.



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**for helping Kuchinate make a difference  
in the lives of vulnerable women & children in 2019!**

To make a gift online, please go to [www.kuchinate.com](http://www.kuchinate.com)

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