

First Steps Toward Recovery: Continuing Our Support of Residents of Israel's South

Presented to
United Jewish Communities
Israel Emergency Committee Workgroup

The Jewish Agency has been standing by the citizens of Sderot and the Gaza Perimeter for the past several years. As tension mounted, we responded. And as we pray for peace and await word of a cease-fire agreement, we are already looking toward helping the south of Israel rebuild their communities and their lives. As the war continues, we are working to ensure that the traumatized residents of this region will be able to take their **First Steps toward Recovery** during the first 90 days immediately after the hostilities come to an end.

Throughout all our work, and at every step of the ongoing security crisis, our mission remains unchanged: **to mobilize our international network of donors and employ our extensive field capabilities to operate a range of supportive services and programs that will address the immediate and long-term needs in the south.**

Drawing on the impact and success of our wide-reaching efforts to repair and rebuild northern Israel in the aftermath of the 2006 Second Lebanon War, and as a result of our ongoing work in the southern war-torn region, the Jewish Agency is a familiar face to the residents; they know who we are and are confident in what we do. We are preparing a comprehensive approach to help galvanize affected residents and communities. We will maximize the Jewish Agency's expertise and afford real relief to those affected by this emergency; **we will be a driving force in the rehabilitation of southern Israel for the first 90 days and beyond.** Based on reports from mayors, local authorities, and our field professionals, we have identified four primary realms of activity and initiatives which are critical to the recovery and rehabilitation of the south's residents.

- I. Continued Respite Activities for Children and Youth**
- II. Educational Enrichment Activities for Children and Youth**
- III. Utilizing Young Communities for Southern Revitalization**
- IV. Recreational Programs and Resources for Residents of Absorption Centers**

Program	Total Requested \$US
I. Continued Respite Activities for Children and Youth	900,000
II. Educational Enrichment Activities for Children and Youth	600,000
III. Utilizing Young Communities for Southern Revitalization	400,000
IV. Recreational Programs and Resources for Residents of Absorption Centers	100,000
Total Unmet Need	2,000,000

Throughout our immediate relief efforts, your support has enabled us to achieve remarkable impact. **Now, together, we can continue helping individuals recover, repairing damaged communities, and encouraging perseverance.**

I. Respite Activities for Additional Southern Children and Youth

Since the beginning of the crisis in the south, the Jewish Agency has been taking children out of the line of fire for one-day respite programs in the north and center of the country. These activities included a concert in the center of Jerusalem by Israeli rising star, Shai Gabsu, a visit to the Ramat Gan Safari, and other fun activities. During the five days that we have been implementing respite activities, more than 20,000 children have enjoyed these activities. Field professionals and parents report that all these children are showing signs of improvement; they are happier, more relaxed, and stronger. These children are from 7 communities who live in a 10 km radius of the rockets. We need to expand the impact of these respite programs and give an opportunity to 21,000 more children from four cities 12-40 km from Israel's southern border—young people who have not yet been offered such relief. These communities include Ashdod, Ashkelon, Beer Sheva, and Kiryat Gat.

The per child cost for one day of respite activity is \$42.

Total request to provide relieve for 21,000 children in 4 communities: \$900,000.

II. Educational Enrichment Activities for Children and Youth

One of the key elements in moving youngsters from trauma to recovery is their reintegration into the formal and informal education systems. Just as the New Tomorrow program was a comprehensive initiative to empower the north's children, the proposed enrichment program will assist the school aged children of the south return to a scholastic and social routine. In this program, we will utilize our existing Youth Futures platform to help the children as they work to overcome their fears, go back to school, and resume normal childhood activities. Nearly 80 Youth Futures Trustees from the affected region, will expand the scope of their work and reach out to many more children affected by the war. They will devote nearly three hours every week, over the course of three months, to additional programming and learning experiences for whole groups of children, not just their Youth Futures participants. Children will be able to enhance their personal potential and build a positive relationship with strong role models. For 3 months, 10,000 children from the war-torn region will enjoy:

- Creative educational experiences
- Heightened one-on-one attention
- After-school activities such as art, drama, sports, and computers that will incorporate elements of post-trauma rehabilitation supervised by professional therapists, implemented by Youth Futures Trustees
- Homework assistance
- Remedial assistance to augment classroom learning

This program will be implemented in Beer Sheva, Kiryat Gat Netivot, Ofakim- Merhavim, Sderot, and Sdot Negev. The cost of expanding the Youth Futures platform for these enrichment activities for 10,000 children: \$600,000.

III. Utilizing Young Communities for Southern Revitalization

The realities of post-war northern Israel indicated that the best way to help ravaged communities is to harness the enthusiasm and energies of young leaders—to infuse the region with people who are committed toward making a difference and becoming a part of the communal framework. Based on the success and impact of Young Communities in the north since 2006, the Jewish Agency is once again turning to Young Communities to help rehabilitate the war-torn south. The young people in these communities have been identified as having the potential to both empower disadvantaged communities and simultaneously help native residents rebuild their lives.

In the southern region of Israel there are three such Young Communities already in action, one in Beer Sheva Dalet, one in the Old City of Beer Sheva, and one in Yachini. These three communities have nearly 100 residents who have made an indelible impact on the south. They have a proven track record for action and effect. The Government of Israel provides the scholarship money for the residents of these Communities; we seek to secure funding that will enable them to undertake special and unique operations necessary to facilitate post-war recovery throughout southern Israel. Through your support, we will be able to capitalize on the drive and spirit of the Beer Sheva and Yachini communities and use their expertise and energies to work with youth from the ravaged region to:

- Help them expand their personal and scholastic potential
- Close learning gaps resulting from the war
- Enhance cultural opportunities throughout their communities
- Rebuild the physical infrastructure of their communities including painting, refurbishing, and rehabilitation
- Empower them to make positive change in their home communities

The total cost for operating this program in Beer Sheva Daled, the Old City of Beer Sheva, and Yachini over a 90 period is \$400,000.

IV. Recreational Programs and Resources for Residents of Absorption Centers

For thousands of new immigrants, their arrival in Israel was marked with an adjustment to life in a war zone. Not only did they have to acclimate to a new language and a new home, but they also face the horrifying realities of air raid sirens, bomb shelters, and trauma. At the Jewish Agency absorption centers, where these new immigrants receive all the attention they need during peace and crisis situations, we have been implementing special programs for the immigrant children. Through special recreational programming, more than 500 youngsters living in 10 southern absorption centers will be able to gain the confidence and communication skills they need to move past the trauma of the war and successfully transition to life in Israel. Additional resources will also be offered, including:

- special counseling sessions
- family workshops (for parents and children)
- learning-skills training
- outings and field trips

All these activities are designed to help the children move past the trauma they have experienced and continue their adjustment to Israeli society. The “Mashabim” Center, an emergency crisis intervention organization, will continue to work with us to implement this initiative.

The cost of implementing this program in 10 absorption centers is \$100,000 (\$10,000 for programming in each absorption center).