

פעילות גיוינט ישראל בתקופת החירום
2009-2006



JDC-ISRAEL Activities in Times of
National Emergency 2006-2009



JDC Israel
Touching Lives, Transforming Communities

JDC-ISRAEL'S Activities in time of National Emergency

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Executive Summary
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Hava Ullman

Editing, Hebrew: Itay Dror

Editing, English: Marilyn Amar, Saralyn Greenblat

Design: Pnina Nachmias

Publication Director: Tuvia Mendelson

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Preface

Since its inception, the State of Israel has unfortunately had to go through many and varied emergency situations. JDC-Israel, which has experience in developing humanitarian services for the various populations in routine times, also supplies direct assistance to these same populations – the elderly, children and youth at risk, the disabled and people with special needs – in times of crisis and emergency situations.

When crises have occurred in the past – specifically after the Six Day War in 1967 and the Yom Kippur War in 1973 – emergency campaign funds were transferred to the State of Israel via the Jewish Agency. These campaigns were in response to wars which were fought on the battlefield.

However, from September 2000 through the end of the second Intifada, the home front became the battlefield as a wave of terrorist and military attacks were launched against Israel’s civilian population. These attacks caused additional hardships on the weaker populations and JDC channeled its expertise to provide much-needed assistance. This was the first time that JDC-Israel received direct financial aid from the emergency fundraising campaign carried out in the United States and Canada. During that period, JDC worked closely with the JFNA (Jewish Federations of North America), the Ministry of Welfare and the Home Front Command Center. This special emergency funding allowed us to provide direct assistance to the weaker segments of the population, and first and foremost to children and youth, under the principle of “Keep the children safe”.

At all times, JDC believes in strengthening the existing infrastructures

of services and programs in the weaker communities and for the poorer populations. During wartime, or times of crisis, JDC provides assistance, through professionals and volunteers together, using its existing social and communal infrastructures extensively. Help is given to the needy populations on the front-line as well as those farther away from the line of fire.

Within the framework of the systematic documentation of JDC's activities in its various fields, I am pleased to present this document which records JDC's operations during times of emergency. The document reflects JDC's decision-making process, its organizational abilities during crisis situations and the recruitment of emergency funding. A central part of the document enumerates and describes the emergency programs, the extent of their influence and their importance to the populations which benefitted from them.

JDC's activities during the emergency period from the year 2000 to 2006, and the documentation of these activities, constitute an authorized, reliable and crucial source for drawing conclusions and formulating processes and other special programs relating to circumstances and conditions that might arise in the future.

Arnon Mantver
Director, JDC-Israel

Executive Summary

This document¹ deals with the various programs that were either initiated or entailed the involvement of JDC-Israel during the emergency state which existed in the country during the summer of 2006 and until the winter of 2009. At the beginning of this period, in the summer of 2006, the Second Lebanon War took place. It turned the civilian home front into a military front line, and obstructed the normal everyday lives of thousands of citizens for a long time to come. At the end of this period, following a long and difficult emergency situation in the South, Operation “Cast Lead” (the war in Gaza) began.

JDC-Israel has vast experience in providing humanitarian assistance to the weaker and disadvantaged populations in routine times as well as in times of crisis. The organization was recruited to provide assistance to the residents in the North as well as the South. JDC’s unique activities during this period were made possible through the emergency fundraising campaign of the JFNA (Jewish Federations of North America).

The total amount of emergency campaign money raised by the JFNA was 58.5 million dollars. The JFNA then transferred this money to JDC-Israel in a number of installments from the summer of 2006 and until the end of 2009. Approximately 6 million dollars of this money was emergency campaign money earmarked for the South during the years 2007-2009. The speedy enlistment of the North American Jewish communities allowed the organization to provide immediate and focused assistance at the start of

¹ The previous document examines JDC-Israel’s emergency programs during the emergency period between the years 2000-2006.

the war in the North. During the first stage of the war, JDC implemented emergency activities, which included the distribution of activity kits for children in the shelters and distribution of hot meals and emergency kits for the elderly. JDC also aided in the evacuation of families away from the front-line, hospitality and vacations for elderly, disabled and children and assistance for those disabled who remained in the confrontation area. The organization's existing infrastructures were crucial in their ability to react quickly and effectively in operating, for example, the "Supportive Community" programs for the elderly, the youth volunteer program of AMEN (City Youth Volunteering), the "Accessible

Community" for the disabled, and providing assistance to non-profit organizations with whom the JDC works on a regular basis.

During the second phase of operation, JDC initiated a program called "Programs for the Day After" for the rehabilitation of the North and the settlements surrounding Gaza. This emergency program was one of JDC's focal and central activities during the period following the war and in the years from 2007 to 2009. Tens of emergency programs were operated at the same time in the confrontation areas by various departments at the JDC. These programs dealt with elderly, children, youth and disabled, for the purpose of returning the residents to their everyday routines and strengthen and develop the Northern settlements.

Ashalim, JDC's non-profit organization which deals with children and youth at risk, operated programs for the advancement of education and emotional support for approximately 50,000 students, including the Arab sector. They also provided assistance to thousands of staff members, initiated programs for preschoolers and post-trauma treatments, established calm rooms and equipped kindergartens with missing equipment. ESHEL, JDC's non-profit

organization for the planning and development of services for the elderly in Israel, aided in the establishment of new supportive communities and in the expansion of the “Warm Homes” program, as well as strengthening the existing non-profit organizations for the elderly. In the field of disabilities, JDC provided assistance for the leaders of supportive communities for the disabled, and for the existing non-profit organizations in providing them with emergency services.

The Division for the Integration of Immigrants strengthened the active youth center programs and assisted those in need during the emergency. The Division for the Promotion of Employment operated programs to reduce unemployment which was exacerbated by the emergency situation. They promoted employment and cultivated entrepreneurship centers within the outlying sector. ELKA, the department for volunteerism, operated volunteering youth projects and provided consultation for local authorities and emergency teams. In addition, they aided existing non-profit organizations which assist populations with special needs.

At the top of JDC’s list of priorities was directing attention to the northern periphery by means of the emergency fundraising campaign during the Second Lebanon War. The program for the rehabilitation of the Galilee was perceived as a historic opportunity for the organization to create a security cloak for weak populations in the settlements of the North as well as aid and strengthen the community in its entirety. Thus, during the years 2007 to 2009, the scope of JDC’s activities in the North grew by major proportions while deepening their cooperative activities with local authorities, organizations and various additional bodies, for the promotion of emergency programs.

In regards to the emergency activities in the South, lessons learned from the

Second Lebanon War were implemented by JDC, and thus joint activities with government offices were more organized and coordinated. One example of a successful implementation can be seen in the “Supportive Community” model that was developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Welfare. The goal of this joint venture was to assist the local authorities on the front lines, to provide immediate solutions for elderly citizens and those with special needs.

The JDC’s involvement in emergency programs in the south of the country had already begun in the year 2000. When the reality of the security situation in the settlements surrounding Gaza and neighboring areas became apparent, JDC increased its involvement in the area. In the summer of 2006, with the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War, attention and emergency fundraising campaign resources were directed mainly to strengthening existing programs in the South and creating new supportive programs.

As opposed to the North, which was under massive fire at that time as a result of the ongoing war, the South was under constant and continuous danger from qassam rockets and mortar shells. For a period of five years, until “Operation Cast Lead” (the Gaza War), the tension and fear of the inhabitants did not cease. The rockets and shells hit homes, kindergartens, schoolyards and bus stops causing major property damage, as well as physical and emotional trauma. The shooting became a matter of routine. There was a constant fear of bomb explosions adjacent to the border and attempts at infiltration by terrorists loaded with explosive belts from the other side of the border fence. Living with this constant fear, the residents closed themselves up for hours at a time in their homes – many of which had no protection from rocket fire. Over 140,000 residents in ten settlements lived in a state of constant terror.

This very difficult security situation caused economic, demographic and social difficulties. Many residents turned to welfare representatives and expressed their feelings regarding the disintegration of “togetherness” and their difficulty in performing day-to-day tasks. More and more families requested help on a daily basis as their fears grew.

In addition to the growing sense of distress looming in the background, there was also a constant shortage of resources – manpower, activity budgets and other solutions for the needy. Professional teams suffering from exhaustion and overwork were also in need of some type of respite. Requests were made to increase available manpower, improve activity coordination, supply training for emergency situations and establish a physical infrastructure which would be suitable for activities and group support.

In 2007, the JDC, in conjunction with additional organizations, prepared an emergency program of operation for Sderot. This program would operate on three levels: emergency operations designed to fulfill immediate needs and safeguarding the residents; supplying aid to existing programs geared to resident respite; and on a long-term basis, ensuring the preparation of ongoing activities for an extended period of time, for those residents who were affected by the emergency situation. There were also activities for the empowerment of complementary services in times of emergency, which would include the development of a system of services which are connected to the strengthening of community empowerment for the residents of the city.

During “Operation Cast Lead” (at the end of 2008 and beginning of 2009), the security situation worsened, causing financial, demographic and social difficulties. As a result, JDC expanded its activities in Sderot and the southern border settlements.

This expansion was made possible thanks to additional finances received by the Jewish Federations of North America.

The main target population during this period was children and youth at risk. There was a fear that their emotional state would deteriorate due to anxiety and stress. For this purpose, JDC-Ashalim developed the “Safe Space” Program – a comprehensive school intervention which provided a therapeutic-educational response for students in distress and students who have experienced trauma and crisis. On the basis of this program, which had operated successfully in the North as well as the South, additional programs were developed: Hibuki, Hug the Kindergartens, Red Alert Song and From Danger to Power. The extremely successful “Hibuki” and “Empowerment” programs were developed and initially operated in a makeshift tent set up for evacuees in Nitzanim during the Second Lebanon War.

In addition, JDC-Israel focused on activities to alleviate the stress on the professional staff in the welfare and education departments. In other words, they set out to help the helpers who had collapsed under the burden of providing services during the emergency period. These activities included increasing professional manpower among the social workers and psychologists and recruiting professionals who were trained as emergency staff. JDC also organized a program to send educational staff, who had been dealing with the stress, distress and trauma of the kindergarten children and students in their schools, away for weekend respites. These weekends incorporated supportive activities, additional professional tools for them and their families as well as providing them with a break from the pressure and stress.

JDC-Israel is, on the one hand, an autonomous organization but connected

through agreements to government ministries. It has vast experience in delving into the depths of various government institutes and their key professionals. On the other hand, the organization creates many unique advantages through its activities for the weaker populations during an emergency period. The most prominent characteristic of JDC's conduct was their swift organization and the compatibility of its mode of operation to accommodate the new circumstances and needs that arose as a result of the emergency situation in the North. The organization continued to operate in the areas where they have experience and expertise as well as strengthening their existing activities, such as providing assistance not only to the disabled, but also to their families.

JDC's mode of operation during the emergency period was also characterized by its cooperation and coordination with government offices, local authorities and other organizations. The organization demonstrated flexibility in its decisions to either cooperate fully with the government or only coordinate with them.

A comparison of how JDC conducted itself regarding the money raised in the first fundraising campaign (2002-2006) and the way it conducted itself during the second period (2006-2009), raised the question of definition of the phrase "emergency activities". JDC's comprehension of the correct use of emergency funds was that such funds would serve JDC populations in the best and most effectively possible way, without ignoring the central component – the intention of the donors.

During the first emergency period, part of the fundraising money – in the amount of 20 million dollars – was transferred in one payment and was designated for one defined cause. This was a short-termed goal – to provide

summer camps for Israeli children, who were in the midst of their summer vacation, but at the same time, were in immediate danger and in unprotected open spaces. The money from the second fundraising period, which arrived in stages, was distributed to various programs, varied target populations and for varying periods of time according to need. The distress situation which was created was seen by the new and more experienced JDC, as a real emergency target. Therefore, this emergency money was funneled into programs which provided emotional relief due to trauma caused by the emergency situation. The money was also used to assist the elderly, disabled and disadvantaged in their day-to-day lives as well as emergency employment.

JDC-Israel was awarded the Israel Prize on Independence Day 2007, approximately a year after the Second Lebanon War. This honor, bestowed on JDC-Israel, expressed, among other things, the appreciation of the State of Israel for the organization and its recognition of JDC's valuable contribution to Israeli society in the development of services for populations in distress during peace, crisis and emergency.