

# **Jewish Agency Mobilization During the Second Lebanon War**

**and Moving Forward  
to Rebuild the Galilee**





**“In these hours and days, we need, more than ever, to unite the global Jewish population to strengthen our morale and hearts as to the rightness of our ways and in our commitment to the State of Israel and the Jewish People.”**

Zeev Bielski, Chairman of the Executive,  
Jewish Agency for Israel

## **The First Days of War**

### **The Jewish Agency’s Immediate Response**

On Wednesday, July 12, 2006 the Hizbullah terrorist organization entered sovereign Israeli territory and kidnapped two soldiers on the border of Lebanon. Eight IDF soldiers were killed. At the same time, Hizbullah simultaneously launched Katyusha rockets against Israeli communities near the border. The IDF responded with Operation Change of Direction.

On Thursday, July 13th, Members of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Israel, sent a letter to the world Jewish community saying, “The State of Israel awoke this morning to a harsh and worrisome reality; an intensive, non-stop attack whereupon rockets are landing in densely populated civilian centers in our cities and towns along the northern border.”

Without delay, The Jewish Agency for Israel responded with an emergency plan to bring the children in the North out of the line of fire and to secure the safety of new immigrants in northern absorption centers. The decision was made to establish summer sleep away camps in the center of the country to bring the children to safety.

A 24/7 Jewish Agency “Situation Room” was immediately activated, providing information to the families of Jews from all over the world whose sons and daughters were participating in programs or were traveling in Israel as tourists. The Situation Room helped them contact their loved ones throughout the country. Zeev Bielski gave out his personal mobile phone number on the web, vowing to do everything in his power to provide aid and assistance to anxious parents. Throughout the entire war, he kept this promise to the Jewish people.

The world Jewish community responded. Within 24 hours The United Jewish Communities (UJC) committed \$1 million toward the Jewish Agency’s effort to evacuate children to the center of the country. Nearly a dozen North American federations, and Keren Hayesod-United Israel Appeal, committed immediate funds.



**“The Jewish Agency was the first to assess the immediate and urgent need to move the children and come up with the right way to do it.”**

Ofra Palmer-Granot,  
Community Relations Coordinator,  
Teva Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd.

## **“Moving our Children to Safety” An Unprecedented Operation**

The “Moving our Children to Safety” Campaign was launched. The tremendous undertaking now needed to be transformed into an operative strategy. Logistics, programming and budgets needed to be identified, defined and approved.

On Saturday night, July 15th, an emergency meeting of all Jewish Agency senior staff was called; from the three department director-generals to the directors of logistics, budget and planning, resource development, public relations, social services, and regional directors with direct access to the field.

Jewish Agency Director-General Moshe Vigdor paved the way for intensive, ongoing interdepartmental cooperation and an immediate decision-making process that allowed the emergency plans to move quickly forward. A management committee was set up and responsibilities for implementation defined. The Jewish Agency set the wheels in motion to mobilize a major national emergency mission to protect Israel’s children. It was agreed that a conference call, led by Vigdor, would be held every morning at 9:00 a.m. to coordinate accordingly. Over 23 Jewish Agency senior staff, from all departments, participated in this daily call for the duration of the crisis; giving reports, continually updating and reassessing the Jewish Agency’s response to the crisis and responding swiftly to the urgent needs in the field as they arose.

Throughout the duration of the war, this management committee ran like a well-oiled machine. There were real-time financial updates; how much money was raised, expenses accrued and swift budgetary approval for every activity undertaken. Each day a summary report was issued detailing how many children were participating in summer camps, a list of operating summer camps, how many calls were received by the Global Center, how many air conditioning units were installed and bomb shelter kits delivered. This real-time reporting allowed the Jewish Agency to play a leading role in serving the citizens of the North during the war.

On Sunday morning, July 16th, the Jewish Agency emergency summer sleep away camps began. Children from absorption centers up North were brought to Jewish Agency Youth Aliyah villages near Hadera, Netanya and Jerusalem – Ben Yakir, Hadassah-Neurim and Kiryat Yearim respectively. Jewish Agency regional staff began registering children from hard-hit northern cities, including Kiryat Shmona and Nahariya. Logistics in organizing buses, finding camp staff and renting facilities were done simultaneously with budgetary approval. The Jewish Agency’s northern regional office and partners in the field proved invaluable in coordinating this massive program.

At 4:00 p.m. Sunday afternoon, leaders of the UJC, Jewish Agency and JDC developed a far-reaching plan to ensure that the populations served by both organizations would



be suitably addressed during the war, including children, youth, new immigrants, disabled and the elderly. The work-plan made certain that resources and manpower were maximized and efforts between the two organizations coordinated.

Simultaneously, the Jewish Agency initiated an advertising campaign throughout Israel under the slogan "Putting the Children in the Center". The Ma'ariv newspaper, Israel's second largest daily, gave the advertising space pro bono. The campaign was launched with the giant Israeli supermarket chain SuperSol. SuperSol committed to help fund the summer camps' meal service, along with food manufacturing giant, Osem. Household names like McDonald's Israel, UPS, Bank Leumi, Paz and Nike-Israel donated goods and services, underwriting excursions and other entertainment for the summer camps. The partnership with the Jewish Agency inspired SuperSol to initiate additional programs for Israelis to donate food and hygienic articles to beleaguered northern citizens and soldiers fighting in Lebanon.

## The Heart of Jewish Agency Wartime Information 24/7 Global Center

The Jewish Agency's Global Center kicked into action 24/7, with trained responders fielding calls from parents registering their children for the summer camps, Israeli's donating to the Jewish Agency's emergency activities, volunteers wishing to know what they could do to help, families who wanted to join the At Home Together program to host their brethren from the North and Israeli companies offering their assistance. People called from all over the world, donating funds and expressing their support for the people of Israel.

Thousands of calls were received and responded to during the first week. By the time the cease-fire was signed on August 14th, an unprecedented 30,000 calls had been handled by the Global Center, 800 new volunteers signed up with the Jewish Agency and thousands of people generously contributed to the emergency assistance programs.

On Monday, July 17th, Israel's Ministry of Education and northern municipalities turned to the Jewish Agency to expand the summer camps. Parents in the North were frantic. Their children were on the front line and they wanted them out of danger.

The Jewish Agency answered the call. Management committee members worked non-stop to secure additional facilities for the camps – at schools, regional colleges, youth villages and other places that could accommodate hundreds of children and youth.



**“The ethos of our youth movement is volunteerism. We care deeply about Israel. Our counselors work really hard toward building a more just society. Some of our members were released from the army, and two days later they joined us in volunteering.”**

Yafit Babila, Young Israeli Volunteer

## **Young Israeli Volunteers Take Action**

Within 72 hours of the establishment of the summer camps over 300 youth movement counselors from HaNoar HaOved VeHaLomed (The Working and Learning Youth Movement) and other youth groups such as Bnei Akiva, the Scouts and the Young Guard volunteered to run the camps’ activities; a tremendous task.

The volunteers were experienced youth counselors, mature, responsible and eager to give of their time to run the camps and help the children. The camps crossed all social, economic and ethnic lines, bringing together children from Jewish, Israeli Arab and Druze communities.

Under any circumstances, running a summer sleep away camp for over 100 kids, aged 10-18, is not easy. Given the fast track set up of these emergency camps the challenge was considerable. The counselors had to keep the children in an organized framework, run activities from morning till evening, help the campers deal with the trauma of war and give them a fun-filled sleep away camp experience while trying to keep their minds off the battles raging up North.

Volunteering at summer camps also brought together members from both religious and secular youth movements, fostering a deeper understanding between the two. Working for a common cause strengthened their connection. This in turn can serve to strengthen the social fabric of Israel’s sometimes divided society.

## **The War Rages On Jewish Agency Activities Intensify**

By Wednesday, July 19th, the hostilities in the North showed no signs of abating. No one knew how long the fighting would continue. Registration for the camps escalated. The Jewish Agency turned to the UJC for additional funding to operate more summer camps. The request was immediately granted.

The cost of each child per week in the summer camp was \$350, including accommodations and full board. Anxious parents living in underground bomb shelters and unable to work did not have to worry about paying for the camp.



In the words of Zeev Bielski, "This is the hour of the home front, revealing the true beauty of Israeli society and the Jewish people as we unite to help those on the front lines who are bearing the brunt of injuries, damage and financial ruin."

With the first week of war drawing to a close, some 4,000 children were participating in 12 Jewish Agency summer camps.

A sophisticated computer program was built that allowed the Jewish Agency to monitor and control all the information related to the emergency summer camps; where each child came from, which summer camp they were attending, for how many days, what they're overall situation was and who was the contact person in the field if there were any problems. Detailed data on the entire summer camp program was broken down by different categories and daily reports and statistical information constantly updated.

## Assisting Frightened New Immigrants in Northern Absorption Centers

While the summer camps were serving a vital need, the Jewish Agency was faced with an emergency situation on a different front. Two absorption centers - in Safed and Nahariya - were directly hit by Katyusha rockets. Thankfully, no one was injured. But the residents, most of them newly arrived immigrants from Ethiopia, were terrified. The Jewish Agency evacuated people to absorption centers in the center of the country. For those with relatives living out of the line of fire, the Jewish Agency paid for their transportation.

Shortly after, the absorption centers in Kiryat Yam and Carmiel were also hit. In total, the Jewish Agency relocated some 2,300 new immigrants to Jewish Agency Absorption Centers in central and southern Israel or with families in safer regions. Jewish Agency social workers visited these families, and provided ongoing assistance and support.

Immediate plans were made to restore each of the absorption centers to working capacity and improve living conditions. Up to \$1 million was needed beyond the partial government compensation.

**“I fought in most of Israel’s wars, and I remember only too well the first Lebanese War in 1982, when Hatzor Haglilit came under fire from Katyushas. But this is worse; we never had to withstand such sustained confinement. The shelters are very small, and unbearably warm in the heat of the day. We brought some fans from our house, but they struggle to keep the place even remotely cool.”**

Shimon Mor Yossef, resident of Hatzor Haglilit

## **Meeting an Urgent Need for Front-Line Civilians**

### **Upgrading Bomb Shelters**

On Saturday night, August 22nd, Nachman Shai, director of UJC in Israel, contacted Zeev Bielski and Moshe Vigdor with an urgent request to undertake the mission of upgrading bomb shelters.

Over one million people were forced to live in bomb shelters. The war uncovered the totally neglected state of the majority of public bomb shelters in the North – crowded, stifling hot, especially during the summer, under-ventilated and completely ill-equipped.

“Running to the shelter each time the siren wailed has become an almost familiar routine,” said Lanna Zohar from Hatzor Haglilit. “But when my home was hit by a Katyusha rocket I went to live with my sister.”

While Lanna might have found comfort surrounded by family, she was hardly prepared for the even more difficult situation she would find.

“The bomb shelters are terrible,” explains Lanna. “I have four small children under the age of 11 and it is becoming impossible for us to continue living here under such horrible conditions.”

In partnership with the UJC, the Jewish Agency mobilized to provide emergency amenities including air conditioning units, televisions, water coolers, chemical toilets and emergency lighting for bomb shelters.

The normally tedious, time-consuming process of putting out a bid and finding suppliers was done in less than 24 hours. Highly professional contractors were found who were willing to install the units under fire. All of the installations were supervised by Jewish Agency staff. The location and installation of the air conditioning units was fully coordinated with the army’s Home Front Command and municipal leaders.

On July 27th, an additional \$3 million was needed for upgrading the bomb shelters. The Jewish Agency turned to the UJC. The request was immediately granted.

“I am overwhelmed by the extent of generosity shown by Jews from around the world, and how quickly they have mobilized to support us,” said Colonel Yankele Ezer of the Home Front Command.



“The Jewish Agency has given us tremendous support. Not just support, but also trust. The fact that they have purchased equipment for the bomb shelters – air conditioners, televisions, cable connections – and given us a free hand to disperse the aid as we see fit, in the places where we know will have the most impact, is very important,” continued Ezer.

Within 10 days, more than 700 air-condition units, 625 televisions and 2,650 emergency lighting were supplied to an initial network of 1,179 bomb shelters across the North. By the end of the war 1,800 air-condition units, 1,600 televisions, 2,700 emergency lighting fixtures, 50 chemical toilets, 150 water coolers and 47 water pumps in bomb shelters were supplied throughout the northern region. Agreements were set in place for the municipalities to use the televisions in community centers and schools after the war.

In addition, preparation of bomb shelter kits for families living in their apartment building bomb shelters began. These kits included emergency lighting, first-aid kits, sanitary items, fans, electric kettle, and brooms and cleaning items to keep the shelters clean.

Amigour – a Jewish Agency subsidiary company – operates public housing for many of the elderly and disadvantaged families. The Jewish Agency retrofitted public housing shelters and shelters in previously-owned Amigour buildings in the North. Electricity, water, sanitary facilities and electrical outlets were provided for 1,523 shelters. These shelters were also painted and cleaned.



**“We need to be here around the clock. The people who remain are those who need the most attention. These include the elderly, families with young babies, or simply those who had nowhere else to go.”**

Hava Maimon, Tapuz Absorption Center  
Director, Nahariya

## **Jewish Agency Workers Risk their Lives to Help Others**

For the 1,500 vulnerable immigrants living in absorption center bomb shelters, including mothers of toddlers and the elderly, the Jewish Agency provided ongoing emergency amenities such as hot meals and snacks, portable chemical toilets and emergency equipment. In addition to their physical needs, the Jewish Agency staff worked 24/7 to care for their emotional and psychological needs.

The Jewish Agency staff workers in the 13 northern absorption centers, in the northern regional offices and throughout the country showed incredible fortitude and dedication during the war. Without fanfare and under near impossible conditions they went above and beyond the call of duty; quiet heroes who believed in the importance and urgency of their mission.

From Haifa to Metulla, Jewish Agency workers left their own homes to stay with the new immigrants. Many of these workers had families who were also living in bomb shelters and the pressure of worrying about their families and staying in the bomb shelters with the new immigrants was taking its toll. The Jewish Agency provided safe places for many of the workers' families during the war to ease their anxiety and fear for their families.

At the same time, to help ease the burden for Hava and absorption center staff throughout the North, Jewish Agency workers from outside of the firing line volunteered to assist their colleagues. These volunteers risked their lives to give their fellow workers much needed respite..

“We are being reinforced by other Jewish Agency workers from the Center and South; remarkable people who are placing themselves at great risk to help out,” said Maimon. “The spirit of togetherness is incredible.” This spirit did not let up at any point during the war.

## **The Third Week of War**

By August 1st, 9,600 children were participating in 28 summer camps from Hadera to the Negev. Almost 17,000 children were moved to safety. Approximate cost: \$5 million. Anticipated number of campers for the next two weeks, should the war continue: 12,000 each session.

While the program of activities for each summer camp varied, they all included an array of challenging outdoor activities such as sports, swimming and hiking, as well as arts and crafts, drama and gymnastics. Field trips included water parks, amusement parks, and interactive museums.



Morning workshops addressed educational and personal issues, such as coping with stress and anxiety, and night activities included sing-alongs, magic shows, performances and campfires. For new immigrant children, activities also included Hebrew ulpan courses.

These emergency summer camps were the same as every sleep away camp parents the world over were sending their children to: a chance to make new friends in a kid-friendly environment of sports, arts and fun activities. The difference was that for these children, it was a lifesaver.

On August 2nd, a very emotional parent day organized by the Jewish Agency brought Ethiopian parents to visit with their children, who had been away at summer camp for two weeks. The Jewish Agency gave both parents and children from the absorption centers mobile phones so they could keep in touch during these difficult times. But seeing each other in person was a great joy for all.

## Non-Stop Solidarity Missions Strengthen Israeli Resolve

Throughout the 30 long, tedious, frightening days of war, non-stop solidarity missions came to Israel and visited Jewish Agency activities. They came from the US, Canada, South America, Europe, Australia and South Africa. Driven by their support for Israel, these individual, family and group missions dedicated their time to visiting Jewish Agency absorption centers and summer camps, where they interacted with Israeli children and adults and heard first-hand reactions to the current crisis. These meetings were incredibly powerful for both visitors and Israelis, as the expression of support and care from abroad strengthened everyone's ability to persevere through the crisis.

Jewish Agency Chairman of the Board of Governors Carole Solomon visited the North a number of times. More than once, she was in a life-threatening situation, running for cover as rockets rained across the skies.

In a letter from Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to the Jewish Agency, the Prime Minister lauded the leadership displayed by the heads of Jewish communities and campaigns both in Israel and throughout the world and ended his letter with these words: "I gather strength and encouragement from your strong stand and activities, and would like you to extend my warm blessings and appreciation to all of our friends in Israel and in the global Jewish communities."

On August 1st, Jewish Agency senior staff held a video conference with the Jewish Agency's 200 emissaries throughout the world. They were updated on the situation in Israel and the Jewish Agency's tremendous role in helping the citizens up North. The message: The people of Israel are under attack. The emissaries were entrusted



with the job of countering the media's negative coverage toward Israel, relaying the facts on the ground to Jewish communities and activating support.

The Jewish Agency emissaries were kept abreast of the situation in Israel throughout the war.

## Support for Non-Jewish Populations in the North

On August 4th, the UJC granted \$3.3 million for activities in the Arab sector. Given the close-knit structure of the families, many parents did not want to send their children to sleep away camps. The solution: to operate day camps within the Arab towns. In order to do this, a safe place was needed. A two-pronged plan was drawn up by the Jewish Agency. It was immediately approved and implemented. The mission: to equip five community centers that were recently built in Arab municipalities, but stood completely empty, with equipment and then to run the summer camps.

These community centers were built with functional bomb shelters, so the children's safety was ensured. Equipment needed included tables and chairs, sports equipment, basic arts and crafts supplies, playground equipment (for after the war ended) and games.

Throughout the week, the children at these camps were provided with a full array of safe summer camp activities, including field trips and swimming out of missile range. The activities were implemented by Arab youth movement volunteers.

## Week-long Respite for War-Weary Families

On August 6th, the Prime Minister of Israel turned to the Jewish Agency and Taglit-birthright Israel to provide a free, one-week respite to the war-fatigued northern residents. The costs were covered equally by the Israeli government, the Jewish Agency and Taglit-birthright Israel.

Families from the North traveled throughout the Center and South of the country, relaxing and enjoying themselves. For one week they were away from the constant sound of artillery and missiles; away from the constant anxiety and fear. The story of



a Katyusha falling on a man when he left his bomb shelter to get bread for his family was still fresh in people's minds.

On August 8th, the head of the Home Front Command approached the Jewish Agency to help provide municipal emergency response professionals and volunteers with protective clothing – bullet-proof vests (flak jackets) and helmets. The Jewish Agency approved the request, recognizing the need to keep emergency workers safe so they could take care of others.

On August 9th, the UJC approved an additional \$16.4 million for continuing emergency needs: 15,000 additional children in summer camps; 500 more air-condition units and respite for disadvantaged families from Kiryat Shmona who had spent almost four weeks living underground.

## Planning for the Day After

On August 10th, members of the Jewish Agency Executive met with Minister Shimon Peres, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for the Development of the Negev and the Galilee. Needs were assessed for the "Day After". The Jewish Agency was charged with developing a comprehensive plan for rebuilding the Galilee, leveraging its extensive existing capacities, regional infrastructure throughout the North and strategic relationships.

The message from the Jewish Agency to Jewish communities around the world: "It is not just the present we need to deal with. After the crisis ends we will need to rebuild. The physical, emotional and economic damage has been tremendous. Lives have been shattered, businesses ruined and property destroyed. We know that the Jewish People will be at our side as we stoically begin to deal with overcoming our losses."

## Mourning a Lone Soldier

On August 12th, The Jewish Agency deeply mourned the loss of French-born Sergeant Johann Zerbiv, a lone soldier who made aliyah on his own in 2003. A proud new Israeli who participated in the Jewish Agency's Nativ Program, a Jewish Zionist identity course for immigrant soldiers, Johann fell in battle defending his country. This past June, he appeared before the members of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors' Committee for the Unity of the Jewish People to share his love for Israel and his commitment to serving in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Johann had dreams of completing his army service and building his life in Israel as a civilian. Those dreams will never be realized.



## At Last, The War Ends

In the last few days of the war, when a cease-fire seemed imminent, but no one was sure from hour to hour what would happen next, the Jewish Agency continued its activities.

When the cease-fire was actually signed on August 14th, and in the weeks immediately following, the facts on the ground for Jewish Agency activities were staggering:

## For Children

### Moving the Children to Safety

Emergency Safe Summer Camps were established within 48 hours of the outbreak of war for northern Israel's Jewish, Arab and Druze children. From July 16th – August 20th, some 36,000 children attended more than 50 sleep away camps, where they received accommodations and all meals, and participated in diverse educational and recreational activities.

### Safe Day Camps for Israeli Arab Children

Many traditional Arab families did not wish to send their children to sleep-away camps. Instead, 11,000 participated in one-day summer camps. Additionally, 3,000 children enjoyed a two to three day summer camp in the Center of the country.

### School Readiness Day Camps for Non-Jewish Children

Approximately 27,000 non-Jewish children attended a one-time, week-long school readiness day camp to prepare them for returning to school. Programs took place in community centers - five of which were equipped by the Jewish Agency with computers, audio-visual equipment and furniture - in approximately 30 Arab, Bedouin and Druze communities. The Jewish Agency supplied materials for all of the activities.

### Moving New Immigrant Children to Safety

Over 500 new immigrant Ethiopian children, ages 10-18, living in absorption centers in the North were taken out of the line of fire to Jewish Agency Youth Aliyah villages near Hadera, Netanya and Jerusalem for the duration of the war. Frequent parent visiting days were arranged.



## For New Immigrants

### Relocating New Immigrants from Bombed Absorption Centers

Six Jewish Agency Absorption Centers in the North suffered direct Katyusha hits. Over 2,300 immigrants were moved to safe Jewish Agency absorption centers, summer camps, youth aliyah villages, and facilities in central and southern Israel. Families were visited by Jewish Agency professionals and provided with crucial assistance and support.

### Emergency Amenities for New Immigrants Under Fire

Emergency amenities were provided on a continuing basis to the 1,500 new immigrants who remained in the 13 absorption centers throughout the North. These amenities included portable chemical toilets, around the clock care, emergency equipment and psychological assistance.

### Rebuilding Damaged Jewish Agency Absorption Centers

Six absorption centers were directly hit by Katyusha rockets, wreaking immense damage to the infrastructure. Work is underway to restore the absorption centers so they can return to functioning at maximum capacity and continue to absorb newly arrived immigrants.

### Assistance for Injured Lone Soldiers

Twelve lone immigrant soldiers were injured during the war. The Jewish Agency immediately identified these soldiers and brought the parents of three of the lone soldiers to Israel to be with their sons. At the same time, the recovering soldiers and their parents were matched with At Home Together volunteers, and the parents were given accommodations at Jewish Agency absorption centers. Degree of assistance for each soldier was assessed for basic products, equipment and financial aid.



## For Northern Israel's Residents

### Equipping Public Bomb Shelters in the North

Northern Israel's bomb shelters were totally unprepared for the outbreak of war – crowded, stifling hot, under-ventilated and completely ill-equipped. The Jewish Agency installed approximately 1,800 air-condition units, 1,600 televisions, 2,700 emergency lighting fixtures, 50 chemical toilets, 150 water coolers and 47 water pumps in bomb shelters throughout the northern region.

### Retrofitting Public Housing Shelters

Amigour – a Jewish Agency subsidiary company – operates public housing for many elderly and disadvantaged families. The Jewish Agency retrofitted public housing shelters and shelters in previously-owned Amigour buildings in the North. Electricity, water, sanitary facilities and electrical outlets were provided for 1,523 shelters. These shelters were also painted and cleaned.

### Bomb Shelter Kits for Disadvantaged Families

Over 2,300 bomb shelter kits were distributed to disadvantaged families. These kits included sanitary items, cleaning products, games, fans, electric kettle and emergency lighting.

### Respite for Northern Residents

Together with its partners, The Jewish Agency provided a “breather” week of rest and relaxation for thousands of northern families suffering from the trauma of living in the line of fire during the war.

### Mega-Fairs

The Jewish Agency lifted the spirits and relieved the stress of tens of thousands of war-wary northern residents - Jews, Arabs and Druze – by providing fun family activities in major northern cities. While parents relaxed, children released their pent-up energy and enjoyed a wide variety of amusement park style rides, inflatable slides, trampolines, clown shows, and musical performances in a festive atmosphere.



### Scholarships for Students Called-up for Emergency Reserve Duty

Thousands of student reserve soldiers answered the urgent call to serve their country. They put themselves in physical danger to keep the people of Israel safe, but were unable to work during the summer, thus losing the main source of their annual income to pay for college tuition. The Jewish Agency is providing immediate scholarships for these soldiers to ensure that they can move forward and receive the college education they so richly deserve.

### Emergency Funds for Small Businesses

Work came to a standstill in the North for an entire month. Small business owners and self-employed trade people are in financial ruin – unable to support their families. As the bills continue to pour in they have no fallback position. The Jewish Agency is providing immediate emergency funds to help small business owners get back on their feet. The first-aid assistance is allowing these hard-working individuals to pay some of their bills such as water, electricity and rent, and kick-start the rebuilding of their businesses.

**The commitment of the Jewish Agency's global partners to support its war efforts was unprecedented. In the United States, Jewish Federations raised over \$302 million for the Israel Emergency Campaign. Through the UJC, over \$120 million has been pledged towards the Jewish Agency's efforts. Around the world, Keren Hayesod and UIA Federations Canada have raised in excess of \$43 million.**

**And the work continues...**



“My children are now afraid to sleep at home, in their own beds. They jump whenever they hear a loud noise and they refuse to talk about going back to school.”

Mother of two schoolchildren who spent many days living in a bomb shelter.

## Plans for The Day After: Rebuilding the Galilee

The Jewish Agency for Israel is a driving force in rebuilding the North. Initial estimated damages are in the billions of dollars, and this figure will only grow.

After extensive consultation with mayors and local authorities throughout the region, as well as the offices of the Prime Minister and Finance Ministry, the Jewish Agency developed four far-reaching responses for the “Day After” to put every resident in the North on the road to recovery:

- Creating a mega small and micro business loan fund
- Investing capital dollars to build vital communal infrastructure
- Transitioning children and young people from crisis to excellence
- Providing emergency humanitarian support for those victimized by the war

In each case, the proposed response builds on existing Jewish Agency programs and expertise, key infrastructure and strategic relationships:

### **Allowing rapid implementation with minimum bureaucracy and delays Maximizing and fully leveraging all available resources**

Only months before the outbreak of war, the Jewish Agency incorporated a new group, Tsafona, charged by the Government to develop a comprehensive, long-range plan to create a new reality in the Galilee. With the best strategic partners already in place, and an advisory council of mayors to be involved each step of the way, the Jewish Agency made a firm commitment to the Israeli government to move Tsafona onto a fast-track in order to jumpstart implementation.

The objective is not to return to the status quo; but rather to transform devastation into an opportunity, finally revitalizing and realizing the potential of this area of strategic priority for the State of Israel. The message to our enemies: we are not only here to stay, but we are investing in the future.

### **Economic Development Fund**

Northern Israel is characterized by many small, privately owned businesses, many in both the tourism and agricultural industries. Some estimates identify as many as 90,000 small businesses that have been crippled by this war. Assisting them in

rebuilding can provide the critical mass necessary for growing job opportunities, fueling development and renewing economic growth.

Utilizing the infrastructure of the Jewish Agency's successful Small Business Loan Fund Initiative, which it has operated for more than a decade with the support of a number of Federations, the Jewish Agency is pursuing the establishment of an unprecedented evergreen mega loan fund to support economic recovery and growth throughout the North – and head off a serious recession.

### **The Next Generation: From Crisis to Excellence**

At the Jewish Agency, the next generation is a primary focus of a majority of its work. When the war broke out, The Jewish Agency immediately mobilized to establish emergency summer camps to get as many children as possible out of the line of deadly fire. The "Day After" will be no different as it works to transition children and young people from crisis to not just recovery, but to excellence.

This will start with successfully moving children back to school. One of the key elements in moving youngsters from trauma to recovery is their reintegration into the formal and informal education systems.

The Jewish Agency is working to ensure that children going back to school have everything they need to succeed, helping them regain a sense of security and self-confidence and making sure that they have basic school supplies that parents may not now be able to afford.

Utilizing its successful Youth Futures model and existing infrastructure in a highly personalized, community-wide approach, The Jewish Agency's emphasis will be on children and teens at risk, including immigrant children, children from families of low socioeconomic strata and populations of minority children (Arabs and Druze).

Those affected the most by the trauma they have suffered will receive intensive individual and group therapy, personalized afternoon educational programs to fill critical gaps and access to activities to motivate and cultivate self-esteem and confidence.

### **Building Vital Communal Infrastructure**

Over 1,000 Katyusha rockets slammed into the northern city of Kiryat Shmona during the war, injuring 25 residents and forcing over 16,000 to leave. Physical damage to homes and public buildings was massive. And this is only one city. The entire northern region needs to be rebuilt.

The Jewish Agency's goal is not only to rebuild, but to go beyond. At the end of the day, its objective is to create vibrant communities with a quality of life that exceeds that which was destroyed.

## Partnering with purpose, all over the world.

To learn more about the work of the Jewish Agency, please contact us: [ask@jafi.org.il](mailto:ask@jafi.org.il)

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