



Jewish Federation
OF GREATER HOUSTON

2023/24 ISRAEL EMERGENCY FUND IMPACT REPORT

Meeting the Moment





MEETING THE MOMENT

The actions of our Houston Jewish community since the horrendous attacks in Israel on October 7 reflect our Jewish values and demonstrate our resiliency. Because of our supportive community, the Jewish Federation of Greater Houston, in partnership with the Houston Jewish Community Foundation, has raised a historic more than \$15.2 million for our Israel Emergency Fund.

As of September 2024, \$11.6 million has been distributed to more than 50 partner organizations and programs.

Guided by our Israel Emergency Fund Committee, we have adapted from addressing urgent relief in the immediate aftermath to ongoing trauma and psychological care, and economic recovery. As this is a long-term recovery process and the war is ongoing, the remaining funds will continue to be allocated based on evolving priorities to provide the most strategic assistance.

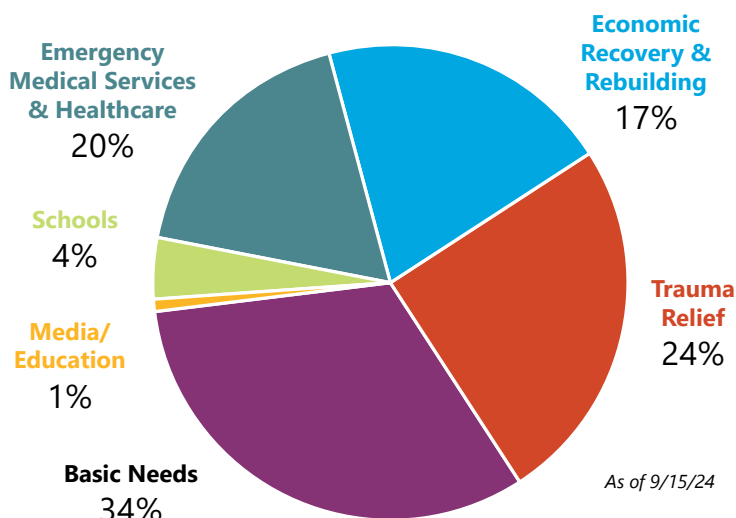
Funds support basic needs, housing, soldiers and victims of terror, emergency medical and rehabilitation services, trauma relief, media/education, and economic recovery.

Beyond the numbers, there are the faces and voices of those who have been helped by this aid. In this report, you will read stories about people directly impacted by our community's collective efforts. Forever changed and forever strong.

Am Yisrael Chai.



ALLOCATIONS BY PRIORITY AREA



For a full list of allocations, see our Israel Emergency Fund allocations report at houstonjewish.org/israelfunding.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE THANKS TO ANNUAL SUPPORT



Our Annual Campaign always supports Israel. We can launch immediate collective responses in times of crisis because of the power of the Annual Campaign. Over nearly a century, the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) system has built global partnerships and infrastructure that enable needs to be met whenever and wherever they arise. It is how we were ready, on October 8, to support Israelis. Moreover, our Houston Federation maintains longstanding partnerships with organizations in Israel that provide humanitarian aid for at-risk populations, education, support for new olim, seniors, and holocaust survivors.



One-third of our annual allocations support these long-term partners globally.



JEWISH AGENCY FOR ISRAEL & JOINT DISTRIBUTION COMMITTEE

The Federation provides annual funding to international partners including the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). With Federation support, each of these organizations has built a global infrastructure and deep ties to communities so they are ready to respond whenever crisis arises, as it did in Israel on October 7.

Since the war began, the Jewish Agency has been providing basic needs and security for the elderly, support for lone soldiers, support for olim (new immigrants), trauma support and volunteer coordination, financial support for victims of terror, and emergency grants for small businesses that have been impacted. JDC has been providing for vulnerable seniors, people with disabilities, children and young adults at risk, families in financial distress, and the unemployed. It also has provided trauma relief and psychosocial care, evacuation and housing, respite and support for frontline communities.



KFAR AZA – WHAT WE HAVE WITNESSED AND HOW WE ARE SUPPORTING

Kfar Aza, a kibbutz near the Gaza border, was one of the many communities destroyed in the October 7 attacks. Sixty-three people were murdered there and four still remain captive in Gaza as of September 2024. Some Houstonians who traveled to Israel on our 2022 Community Mission visited Kfar Aza and saw the beautiful, thriving community that it once was, connecting with the people and the land. We made friends, we shared laughs and meals, and we have beautiful memories. Chen Kotler, a kibbutz leader introduced the group to her home.

Our February 2024 Solidarity Mission returned to Kfar Aza and again met with Chen. She showed them the devastation that left an indelible mark on their land and in our hearts.



Chen Kotler speaking with our Houston delegation from her home in Kfar Aza on the 2024 Solidarity Mission.

Chen shared an hour-by-hour rendition of what happened on October 7. Hamas had maps of the entire kibbutz. Fighting persisted there for five days. Chen showed remnants of the carnage and explained how her own family survived.

While the bullet holes, burnt homes, and blood smeared walls certainly leave their own impression, it is her words that stick with us, and we share with you.

"Now is not the time for shalom," she said. "But we need to keep shalom in our heart because we must bring it back someday...for our children."

We here in Houston will hold onto the promise of shalom until the day that dream can be realized. And meanwhile, we will stand strong.





PRIORITY AREA: **BASIC NEEDS**

- *Food, housing, and financial assistance for impacted families*
- *Additional support for special populations such as IDF soldiers and victims of terror*

VICTIMS OF TERROR

The **Jewish Agency for Israel's Victims of Terror Fund** provides emergency aid year-round offering emergency grants within 48 hours of an attack, followed by long-term rehabilitative care.

Since Oct. 7, the Fund has supported people like Tamar, who attended the Nova Music Festival with her boyfriend of three years, Ofek. They arrived at the festival early in the morning and soon headed back to their car when they heard the volley of rockets and shells being fired from Gaza. After unsuccessfully trying to flee, they found their way into a bomb shelter, which Hamas terrorists attacked with grenades and automatic weapons. They managed to escape to a house in nearby Kibbutz Alumim, but were again attacked. Ofek was shot in the chest and died immediately.

After an encounter with the terrorists, Tamar was shot in the stomach, but managed to make a tourniquet, and survived bleeding on the floor for several hours until she could be evacuated to the hospital. Tamar suffered from shrapnel wounds to her back and a bullet wound to her stomach that extended through her back, causing severe nerve damage. She will require long-term rehabilitation.



The Victims of Terror Fund will serve an estimated **10,000 families**, 10 times the number served before the war



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Because I was injured, I can't work and it's very hard for me. The support from the Jewish Agency is immensely helpful and really important for me.

– **Tamar Kam, survivor of the Nova Festival massacre. Before October 7, she was a manager at a clothing store and supported herself and her mother.**

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SOLDIER AND FAMILY SUPPORT

HaOgen provides support for reservists and families of soldiers. This mostly volunteer organization holds online support groups, gives families a stipend for special activities and childcare, and organizes special activities around the holidays. There has been an increase in women who need emotional support, including an uptick in postpartum depression and some who are suicidal.



Assisting
14,000
families
in 250 cities

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Every night we open an online support group, some nights a few groups. We see the need and we keep opening more. Every group gets filled in four minutes. They are for wives of soldiers who are serving. Some have gone home and then go back to Gaza for a second or third time. This wasn't expected. It's harder for the families. They say, 'We barely remember how we went through that one, we don't know how we're going to do it again.'

– Rachel Azaria, HaOgen Director & Founder

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The Association for Israel's Soldiers provides wrap-around care and activities for soldiers, including the purchase of essentials for front-line soldiers, such as vital personal gear, clothing (non-tactical), and basic physical hygiene supplies.

After several months of fighting, the Association provided soldiers who were injured in Gaza with essential needs, such as warm clothes (tracksuits) in the winter, and tablet computers.

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"The tablets greatly cheered the soldiers who were injured in Gaza, allowing them to stay connected to the world even from their hospital beds."

– Michal Cohen Amir, Association for Israel Soldiers





FOOD SECURITY

Leket Israel, the National Food Bank, is Israel's leading food rescue organization. It procures healthy, surplus food and delivers it to those in need through partner organizations. Since the war began, Leket has reconfigured its model to provide immediate assistance to residents of southern Israel, farmers whose land was destroyed, and to other affected families.



Provided more than
400,000 hot meals
through emergency assistance



ANNUAL
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PARTNER

The situation right now is difficult. We are exhausted by the war, but slowly we will recover. That's who we are, we fall, and we rise. The food we receive from Leket Israel is so heartwarming. We appreciate the way you give with love and caring."

– **Malka Ovadiah, a Holocaust survivor living in Or Akiva (central Israel), receives food from a Leket partner organization and also volunteers to help others**



HOUSING

Givat Haviva strives to create a model society in Israel, emphasizing the importance of a Jewish and Arab shared society through education, public engagement, art and culture activities, and more. Its 40-acre campus provides a tranquil and neutral location to bring together members of divided societies for courses, seminars, camps, conferences, meetings, and forums. After the war began, it became a refuge for 200 people who were evacuated from the south. Givat Haviva organized mental health services and essential amenities for evacuees. They also provided many social activities for families and children to come together as a community to heal.



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When I arrived I couldn't speak. I was tongue-tied because I wanted to be strong in front of the children. I wanted them to feel secure and show them I was in control. There is a team of psychologists, all volunteers. They give us the tools to be able to mediate this situation with our children."

– **An evacuee from the south of Israel**



PRIORITY AREA: TRAUMA RELIEF & PSYCHOLOGICAL CARE

- *Wide-scale support for those struggling to cope emotionally*
- *Special focus on teens, victims of rape and terror, and soldiers*

The **Israel Trauma Coalition (ITC)**, founded by the UJA Federation of New York in 2001, provides leadership and resources before, during, and after a crisis. As the need for psychological care has continued to increase since October 7, ITC is training a new cadre of psychologists, therapists, and social workers to keep up with the growing demand. ITC only employs clinical social workers or psychologists with a clinical background in psychology. This includes equipping specialized teams that work with particularly vulnerable people.

An 8-year-old boy, "L," was evacuated with his family to a hotel at the Dead Sea. At the hotel, he didn't want to leave the room because he was so scared and became increasingly withdrawn and extremely anxious. His parents were concerned, but also frustrated and getting angry with him and wanted him to "snap out of it." ITC therapists helped them manage the situation, learn to accept their child's reactions to the October 7 events as entirely "normal," and adopt a more supportive and accepting approach.



We took small steps with the therapist walking beside us. It took us a while to realize that we could and should take control of the situation, that it was our responsibility to take care of our children. In a way we have let our children down because we made them deal with huge challenges, but we are proud of them, and we admire their progress and the way they cope. The therapist helped us put things in perspective and learn to cope.

– Mother of 8-year-old boy "L"

MENTAL HEALTH IN THE COMMUNITY



The Federation's single largest grant of \$500,000 supports the establishment of 16 mental health community intervention centers throughout Israel to assist with acute PTSD needs. This initiative is a partnership between the Jewish Federations of North America and the Israeli Ministry of Health.

Hadassah Medical Organization is tackling the widespread need and escalating demands for psychological and psychiatric aid, along with physical rehabilitation services. It focuses on specialized support services for trauma victims, including displaced families, individuals battling severe anxiety, and training and supporting the medical professionals who are



providing wartime care. It also opened its new Gandel Rehabilitation Center on its Mount Scopus campus several months early, while still under construction, to keep up with the increased demand for physical rehabilitation because of the war.

In November 2023, Infantry Reservist Yossi Shlomo, 36, was injured and fighting for his life in Beit Hanoun in northeast Gaza. "I tried to crawl. My buddies saw me and dragged me away, put a high-pressure bandage on my severed femoral artery, and eventually got me to a helicopter. I was transfused in flight to Hadassah. That's when I knew I'd live," he said. "I didn't care if I lost my leg, my arm, my sight. I'd hold my wife and children again."

Shlomo became one of the first patients to be treated at the newly opened state-of-the-art Gandel Rehabilitation Center. Months later, his wounds are largely healed and recovery has been hard work. "The staff challenged me with long, difficult hours of therapy to restore use of my right leg and to mitigate the nerve damage."



PRIORITY AREA: EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES & HEALTHCARE

- *Supplies and equipment for first responders and hospitals*

Magen David Adom provides first-responding emergency medical services across Israel and operates Israel's blood bank. Since October 7, its EMTs and paramedics have treated more than 16,000 wounded people, often while under rocket attack and gunfire themselves.



Supplies **100%**
of the blood
needed by the IDF



Being available to my community and helping it keeps me going and motivates me to continue saving lives, even under difficult and life-threatening conditions. I'm happy to be part of MDA even though this period is challenging and full of dangers.

– **Dor Vaknin, Senior EMT and Deputy Manager of the Medicycle Division**



United Hatzalah serves as a community-based volunteer emergency medical service (EMS), which operates with 7,000 volunteers across Israel. Federation grants supply volunteers with the equipment they need to save lives and the protective equipment to keep themselves safe including protective vests and helmets, oxygen tanks, defibrillators, trauma bandages, and tourniquets.

On October 7, it immediately mobilized all 7,000 of its volunteers. The medics who reside in Israel's southern communities responded to calls in their own neighborhoods, ensuring that IDF personnel and civilians received emergency medical treatment, often under heavy gunfire. At risk to their own lives, they worked shoulder to shoulder with the IDF to rescue local citizens and establish large staging areas to treat patients.



On October 7, 9-year-old Michael Idan and his younger sister Amalia hid in a closet for 12 hours after both their parents were brutally murdered in front of them by Hamas terrorists in Kfar Aza. Dr. Tamar Schlezinger, a United Hatzalah's Psychotrauma and Crisis Response Unit specialist, remained on the phone with the children for the entire 12 hours.

At the beginning of the call, to prevent the children attracting the attention of intruders, Dr. Schlezinger asked, "Can you please both put your phones on silent mode? Can you please do that for me, Michael?"

She continued talking to them and keeping them calm and reassuring them until Israeli special forces were able to rescue them.



PRIORITY AREA: ECONOMIC RECOVERY

- *Employment services for individuals, loans for small businesses, and financial aid to farmers in the Gaza envelope*



The **American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC)** deployed mobile employment units soon after October 7 to help evacuees re-enter the workforce at a higher level than before. It has also launched eight job retraining courses serving several hundred of the most vulnerable evacuees. In addition, JDC created a groundbreaking program for newly disabled civilians and soldiers that links tailored medical rehabilitation and employment services.

Deployed mobile employment units in over 130 evacuee hotels in 14 locations that helped more than **2,500 evacuees** re-enter the workforce.



Rona is a 44-year-old mother of three from a moshav near the northern border. She was a teacher's aid for a local kindergarten, earning little and lacking any potential for career growth. After working with a JDC career counselor from one of the mobile units, Rona enrolled in an accounting course and is on her way to earning a higher income, with prospects for growth and opportunity for herself and her family when she returns home.

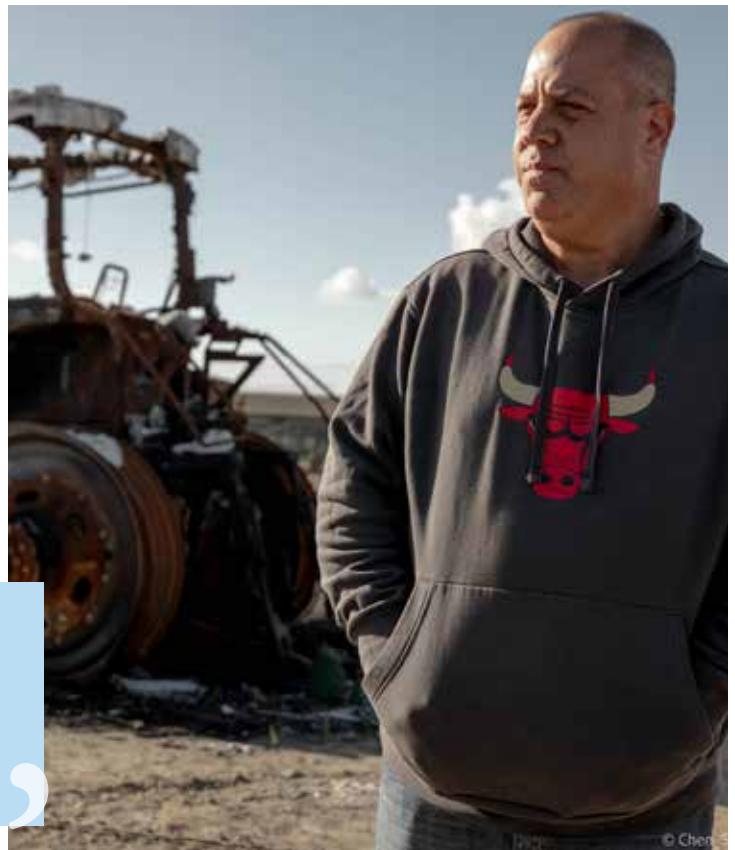
ReGrow Israel was established days after the October 7 attacks by Israeli farmers, NGOs (non-governmental organizations), and agricultural experts to restore the damaged fields and grow back stronger for the future. The kibbutzim and moshavim farming communities in the Western Negev produce 70% of Israel's fresh produce and pioneering climate-resilient technologies for the world. Regrow Israel is providing the funding for the farmers to repurchase the equipment needed to rehabilitate their fields and livelihood.



In the attacks, **98,842 acres** of agricultural land were damaged; farmers lost more than **\$500 million in income**

Without Israeli agriculture, we cannot live in this country. We are responsible for our own food security and need to be able to provide locally.

– **Ofer Lieberman, Kibbutz Nir-Am**

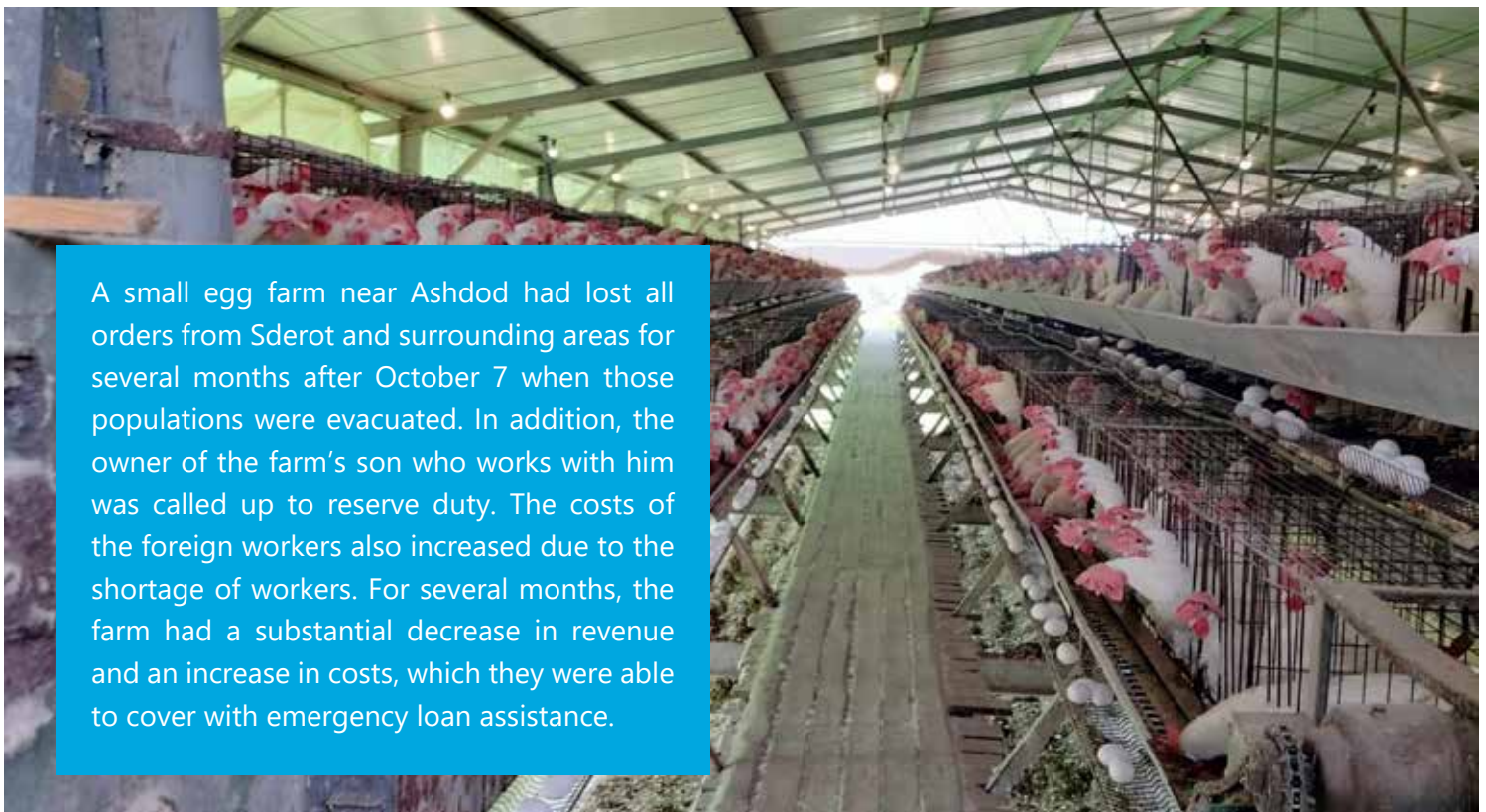


The **Jewish Federations of North America Israel Emergency Loan Fund** provides a lifeline to businesses across Israel severely impacted by the war and without access to traditional banking credit. Through its Investment Committee, the Loan Fund allocates funds to fully vetted loan platforms who each provide lower interest loans to small businesses in a particular set of markets and sectors.



77% of small businesses

in have experienced revenue declines of more than 50%



A small egg farm near Ashdod had lost all orders from Sderot and surrounding areas for several months after October 7 when those populations were evacuated. In addition, the owner of the farm's son who works with him was called up to reserve duty. The costs of the foreign workers also increased due to the shortage of workers. For several months, the farm had a substantial decrease in revenue and an increase in costs, which they were able to cover with emergency loan assistance.



PRIORITY AREA: SCHOOLS, MEDIA & EDUCATION

- *Enable schools and educational programs to maintain programming and support additional needs related to the war's impact*
- *Efforts promoting accurate and unbiased information and documenting the war's impact*

Shlavim empowers members of the Israeli religious community to achieve social integration, financial independence and lift Israeli children out of poverty. Through its vast network of programs, Shlavim provides underprivileged children with the tools they need to overcome their circumstances and pursue a healthy, productive life for themselves. Additionally, they help unemployed adults match with businesses whose employees were called up to serve in the IDF.

Shlavim maintains a strong presence in the South, which enabled it to step in quickly after the war broke out to support evacuated families. Shlavim



Operates
250 branches
across the country

asked all their youth group directors to check in with the children and their families to see what they could do to help and began providing support for the evacuated families. This included helping them relocate and providing programming to displaced families, and helping unemployed adults match with businesses whose employees were called up to serve in the IDF.

One thing the youth group directors found from their initial outreach was that several bar mitzvah boys had their plans shattered as a result of the war. Shlavim made their celebration possible and worked with Aish Hatorah, to hold the bar mitzvah.



My son went to sleep crying every night because his bar mitzvah celebration was canceled until he heard Shlavim was hosting a bar mitzvah for him. This celebration outdid all our expectations!

– A Shlavim mother



Hand in Hand operates six schools across Israel that educate a diverse mix of Jewish and Arab-Israeli students with lessons taught in both Hebrew and Arabic. Each class has a Jewish and an Israeli Arab teacher. The aim is to cultivate equality, cooperation, and shared society among Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel. Since the war began, all schools have had to increase services to families and their communities. They have provided extra resources to help with counseling, mental health support, and opportunities for dialogue among parents and students. Schools have also expanded their shelters.



2,000 Jewish and Arab students and their families supported during the 2023-24 school year



Our graduates know that a different life is possible here, for all its people. It's not a hope or a belief, but something they know to be true from their own childhood at Hand in Hand. They understand the complexity of our reality, and understand the other side with the same depth as their own. Our graduates have the tools to process this complexity, and also to build bridges across it.

– **Hand in Hand Alumni Coordinator, Yakir Renbaum**



ANNUAL FUNDING PARTNER



Facilitated more than 2,000 hours of informal workshops and activities for **7,412 students in 60 schools** and evacuation centers and at ORT's Kfar Silver Youth Village

World ORT provides formal and informal education focusing on scientific and technological education for students in the periphery of Israel, to reduce social-economic gaps.

Since the war began, it has helped thousands of students and teachers with educational and mental health support. This includes therapeutic activities for students in Kfar Silver, respite trips for first and second-circle victims of the war, basic needs, and programming for children of evacuees in selected evacuation centers and evacuee schools throughout Israel. ORT is also addressing the security needs of its Kfar Silver Youth Village.



ANNUAL FUNDING PARTNER



We went to do an activity for some of the children that were in a terrible situation in the south. And we brought them the robotic kits and they started to build robots and programming them, and they were laughing and they were very happy. And I saw even tears on their parents' eyes when they saw them—how they are working in such happiness after what they went through in the south.

– **Mirav Shines, World ORT Kadima Mada, YOUiversity Center of Excellence, Eastern Galilee**





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