



CEO Report to the Board of Governors

Continued Activity In A Constantly Changing Reality

It has been two weeks since our last update to our Board and as we continue our essential work at The Jewish Agency for Israel, we wanted to highlight the incredible efforts that continue despite the coronavirus crisis. The constant updates in government regulations limiting gatherings and movement has forced us to adjust the way we do our work, while still maintaining the crucial services our beneficiaries depend on. Our highest priority remains the physical safety and mental health of our staff and *Shlichim* (Israeli emissaries), wherever they are in the world, as well as thousands of lives we are responsible for 24/7, mainly *olim* (immigrants) in our facilities and senior citizens in our Amigour social housing communities.

In this report, you will find a glimpse of our most recent work including:

- Personal stories of the people who have been directly affected by the situation and how we are addressing their needs, including new olim and vulnerable populations
- Our work and initiatives to support the non-profit sector in Israel
- Our "virtual" work and some examples of the creativity that has emerged since our educational activities moved online

The Jewish Agency is There

Personal Beneficiary Stories in the Time of the Coronavirus

Aliyah and Absorption

During March, a total of 1,000 new immigrants came to Israel from all over the world. The Jewish Agency, in cooperation with the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, local municipalities and Aliyah organizations, took action to provide the basic needs for those inside and outside absorption centers, who now require increasing support due to the crisis.

We're here for you with helpful resources, live events and interactive experiences.

See what's going on here.

This support includes:

- Providing the infrastructure for quarantine housing for 580 new immigrants and maintaining constant contact with immigrants, dropping off food baskets for those who are in need. We are also readying preparations for holding dignified and small Passover Seders for families in absorption centers.
- Assisting immigrants who are on unpaid-leave by providing welfare stipends. We have also extended the current young immigrants program (presently serving 400 olim) for two months with subsidized housing in light of the shortage of jobs and adequate housing currently in the market. Additionally, we are providing these young immigrants with stipends.
- Maintaining a routine of daily activities for kids at absorption centers to replace the non-operational educational system in addition to supplying them with hundreds of tablets so that they can join their class mates at the remote learning. We are also addressing the psychological needs of families who are having a difficult time coping with the new reality and reducing stress by supporting them with professional consultants.
- Operating our Global Center 24/6 and during Passover to address all incoming requests and inquiries.

**THAIS AND MARCOS VINÍCIUS MADE ALIYAH FROM BRAZIL IN OCTOBER 2019.
SINCE THEN, THEY HAVE BEEN AT ULPAN ETZION.**



“When the pandemic started, we were quite afraid and anxious about the future, not knowing what it would bring as we are not working at this moment because of the virus,” the Viníciuses shared.

The Jewish Agency invited the Viníciuses and hundreds like them to remain in Jewish Agency housing until these new immigrants manage to find jobs and get housing of their own. The Jewish Agency is helping them buy groceries, providing online classes and overall financial and emotional support during this difficult time.

“ Receiving the message about being able to stay in The Agency’s dorms longer...it was the best thing that could happen to us. We really appreciate the opportunity to stay here and all the support. ”

ADISO KAHSON, A NINE-YEAR-OLD BOY FROM ETHIOPIA, JUST ARRIVED IN ISRAEL WITH 13 FAMILY MEMBERS.

For 11 years his family had been waiting in a Gondar transit camp to make Aliyah. As long as Adiso could remember, his family hoped and prayed that one day they would move to Israel. Finally, the Kahson family was approved for Aliyah, and The Jewish Agency brought them home to Israel.



The Kahsons went directly into quarantine upon their arrival to Israel amidst the coronavirus.

They're receiving daily food staples and emotional support, but as the Passover holiday comes near and the coronavirus crisis remains very serious in Israel, they'll need even more help from The Jewish Agency.

Yet Adiso and his family are the lucky ones. Since the 1970s, The Jewish Agency has been instrumental in the resettlement of Ethiopian Jews through Aliyah of Rescue missions and clandestine operations. Today, a final wave of Ethiopian Aliyah is in progress with some 8,000 Falash Mura awaiting permission to immigrate to Israel. The Jewish Agency maintains an infrastructure and conducts pre-Aliyah services in the Gondar region but the overwhelming majority of these 8,000 Ethiopians live in abject poverty, with mounting health and welfare needs that are not being met.

With confirmed cases of coronavirus in Ethiopia, the World Health Organization and others are concerned that sub-Saharan Africa will be especially badly hit because of the lack of health facilities. We are particularly worried about the extremely vulnerable young children and frail elderly.

The Jewish Agency is supporting the Ethiopian community waiting to make Aliyah by:

- Shipping a half a ton of Matzot for Passover from Israel.
- Allocating \$160,000 for necessary hygiene products and supporting the elderly population.
- Providing continued support and funding of the food project for pregnant women and children until the end of 2020.

Vulnerable Populations

YOUTH AT RISK



Seventeen-year-old Elisheva was taken out of her home in Holon, central Israel, a few years ago, and brought to live in a Jewish Agency youth village. Today, the Ramat Hadassah Youth Village, a residential campus for Israeli children who can no longer live with their families, is Elisheva's only home, and she has no relationship with either of her parents.

The Jewish Agency staff at Ramat Hadassah are trying to maintain a routine for Elisheva and the many other teens and pre-teens who remain on youth village campuses and provide for their educational, emotional, physical and mental needs. These youths have only Ramat Hadassah and Jewish Agency staff to rely on and we are there to take care of them around the clock and ensure their sense of security.

AMIGOUR

Amigour, a Jewish Agency subsidiary, provides housing for Holocaust survivors and senior citizens in 57 sheltered homes throughout Israel. In addition to putting a roof over their heads, Amigour provides residents with a broad range of social and cultural services in its on-site facilities, greatly enhancing the residents' quality of life. The elderly residents of Amigour facilities are among the most vulnerable populations in Israel under normal circumstances. However, due to the effects of the coronavirus on the elderly and chronically ill, their risk level is further elevated.



Etya Papugayev is one of Amigour's at-risk residents. Born in 1931 in Lithuania, Etya and her family moved into the Kovno Ghetto when the war broke out. Her family was murdered soon after, but Etya, then 12, survived by working as a housemaid for a Polish family who kept her Jewish identity a secret.

In 1996, at the age of 65, Etya and her children moved to Israel. By 2009, Etya realized she could no longer live on her own and was taken in by Amigour. Etya had suffered so many tragedies in her life and was always left to handle them on her own, but now she is no longer alone.

We have continued supporting Amigour in these times of emergency as staff work 24/7 to provide care for 7,000 senior citizens. Further, The Jewish Agency leadership has enlisted volunteers from its staff and program participants to perform two important tasks to aid the elderly population:

- Support inhabitants of Amigour: Volunteers will conduct a number of tasks for the well-being of individuals living in Amigour homes including making regular phone calls to ameliorate loneliness, reinforcing staff efforts, and enacting food drives.
- Food delivery drives as part of the national "Golden Shifts" effort together with the Department of Welfare and government emergency services. Last week, The Jewish Agency brought dozens of volunteers to package and deliver agricultural products from farmers in Southern Israel to over 1,000 elderly Amigour residents. Additional food delivery efforts are planned for this week.

ITALY AND OVERSEAS COMMUNITIES



With the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in Italy, and as it became a major center of illness, Jewish families are struggling due to the deteriorating conditions. One Jewish family, who lives in Milan, has been struggling to put food on the table. The father has not been employed in some time due to a disability but works as an Uber driver when he feels well enough to support his wife and three children. Now in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic, he is not even able to drive customers because everything is shut down.

The Jewish Agency partnered with Keren Hayesod and reached out to the community in order to understand their immediate needs. The communities in Rome and Milan needed funds to purchase hygiene products for community members and especially for their nursing homes, in addition to establishing a “hotline” which community members can call for assistance and systems for remote learning, following the closure of the education system. The Union of Italian Jewish Communities have received support as well to provide for their immediate needs.

With these initial needs met, and in light of the continuing crisis and the fact that many community members have lost their income, it became necessary to also provide food packages to those members of the community who experience serious financial difficulties.

As the situation becomes dire in Spain as well, The Jewish Agency needs to urgently provide support packages to Jewish families in need in both Italy and in Spain. These packages include food for the holiday, basic supplies and the cost of package delivery. This support is especially critical going forward, as this is a long-term crisis that we anticipate will worsen.

Our work in Israel's Non-Profit Sector

The global Jewish people have long taken an active and central role in the construction and development of Israel, including its thriving non-profit sector. Hundreds of billions of dollars from many Jewish communities around the world have been invested over the years in Israeli society through various non-profits.

Today, there are around 16,000 non-profit organizations in Israel, and they employ about 16% of Israel's labor force. These non-profits provide services worth billions of shekels every year, accounting for 15% of Israel's GDP. Since the coronavirus crisis in Israel began at the beginning of March, tens of thousands of non-profit employees have been laid off. There has been a dramatic surge in the number of organizations seeking emergency assistance, including non-profits that serve at-risk youth, battered women, the elderly, people with disabilities, populations with special needs, and more.

Since the crisis started, Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog has personally played a leading role in convening a daily emergency forum of the civic society umbrella organizations and leaders to discuss the sector's problems in light of the coronavirus crisis and ways to find solutions to the challenges that threaten to collapse thousands of Israeli philanthropy-based nonprofits. He also approached the Prime Minister, alongside other relevant ministries, calling on them to formulate an emergency response to this sector. Last week, he led an emergency conference attended by thousands of non-profit representatives in Israel.

The Jewish Agency has a special responsibility to act immediately in order to ensure the sustainability of non-profit organizations in Israel and ensure that the Jewish People's investment in Israeli society will not be for naught. And we are taking this responsibility seriously.

EMERGENCY LOAN FUND AND MENTORING PROGRAM FOR NON-PROFITS

As a result of the coronavirus, The Jewish Agency and non-profit lender Ogen launched an Emergency Loan Fund for Non-Profits. This new fund will provide consulting services and special loans, with no requirement for guarantors, to assist non-profit organizations suffering financially due to the coronavirus. The program includes provisions for immediate loans at a three percent interest rate along with financial consulting services that will help these organizations stay afloat.

Ogen (formerly known as the Israel Free Loan Association) has allocated 30 million NIS in lending capital for the loans. The Jewish Agency has allocated three million NIS from its partners in North America (JFNA, UJA-NY, Detroit, Greater Miami and Pittsburgh) toward guaranteeing the loans, matching a three million contribution from Ogen donors, including the

Migdal Group. We will continue working on expanding the budget and recruiting additional partners, including the Israeli government and global philanthropic organizations.

The initiative will include mentoring and financial consulting services from a network of hundreds of mentors from the business and NGO sectors to help the CEOs of non-profit organizations plan for the many challenges expected ahead. These services will be provided as part of a new 'Menta-Or' center that The Jewish Agency has launched together with Keren-Shemesh (part of the Ogen Group), and the Israel Venture Network (IVN), and will include advice on balancing budgets, fundraising, consolidating and adjusting services, and creating an emergency plan for the next 18 months. We are also engaging dozens of our donors and members of the Spirit of Israel, our Israeli fundraising arm, to become mentors for this program, among them a large group of senior managers from big corporations in Israel.

In less than 48 hours after launching the loan fund, more than 60 NGOs reached out to inquire about loans and more than 30 applications have already been submitted. We are reviewing these applications through a vetting committee every night into the late hours in order to offer answers as soon as possible as these funds are crucial.

Going Virtual & Embracing Creativity in Online Programming

As we continue our routine work schedule at The Jewish Agency, we moved many of our meetings, conferences and lectures to video conferences. In addition to that, we have added content and webinars provided by our own employees that pull from their wide knowledge and expertise in different fields for all to enjoy. These exciting live events, educational and entertaining sessions, and other interesting materials have been amassed in a new online activities page on our website, which you can see [here](#).

So far, we are totaling more than a million meeting minutes and tens of thousands of participants on Zoom calls!

While the coronavirus has been hard on all of us and poses many unprecedented challenges, this situation has also brought about much creativity and exciting new opportunities. We are so proud of our teams for turning this negative into a positive and approaching this period with unbridled enthusiasm and a commitment to engaging and connective programming.

Below are just a few examples of some of the unique activities our units have been doing in the virtual realm for the past two weeks. We are currently working on compiling all of the activities on one mini-site that would be accessible to the public.

SHLICHIM



During this time, many of our Shlichim around the globe are managing to maintain a somewhat normal work routine from home virtually.

You were all invited to attend the virtual Idan Raichel concert, which lifted our hearts and the hearts of 400,000 people around the world, including our Shlichim, as you can see [in this video](#).

Our emissaries continue to provide excellent content to their communities and Jews at large in spite of the changing reality including:

- A series of private chats with Natan Sharansky and his five tips for solitude
- Zoom sessions about arts and crafts, food, dancing, storytelling, informative sessions and more.
- Zoom sessions where Shlichim host their parents who share their cooking and dancing skills on video, bringing families who otherwise couldn't be together, closer.

And our Campus Israel Fellows have teamed up with Hillel International's initiative [Hillel@Home](#) to provide Israel engagement and education by connecting the fellows to students over video conference. For an in-depth look at the amazing programs and activities our Israel Fellows are doing, [click here](#).

At the same time, we are providing our Shlichim with additional content for them to enjoy in their free time while encouraging them to stay at home. Some of this content was made by The Shlichut Institute while some was provided by individual initiatives from our returning Shlichim.

PARTNERSHIPS

For the past two weeks, we have witnessed a massive flow of content shared by partner communities in solidarity and mutual worry for the wellbeing of partners from overseas. The unique content was created and shared over the web between communities as part of the **#FacingCorona2Gether**. For example, [this video of "Narrow Bridge"](#) in sign language sent from the Arava communities to their partners in Australia.

Communities created a calendar of online, live content to be enjoyed by those currently at home which included activities such as virtual tours of the partnerships' areas, fundraisers for food packages, cooking sessions and joint Kabbalat Shabbat.

MAKOM

Makom has introduced "L'Chaim: The Makom Salon," a series of conversations hosted by Jonny Ariel, Director Emeritus of Makom, and several esteemed friends and colleagues to take place over the next few weeks. In these troubling and perplexing times, this reflective Salon that prioritizes care and connection will bring participants together as they tackle tricky topics. [Join the conversation here.](#)

DIGITAL UNIT



We are proud to announce a first-of-its-kind collaboration between the Israel Tech Challenge (ITC) and The Jewish Agency to create a hackathon in which teams will have to find a solution to a selection of needs The Jewish Agency faces. The first stage of development will begin in the next week where 25 ITC participants and graduates will form work groups to find up-to-date solutions to help deal with the new challenges the coronavirus raises.

Jennifer Brenis, who made Aliyah six years ago and currently works in ITC is leading this initiative. She shared that students and ITC alumni signed up for this hackathon, eager to help find a solution to deal with the Corona crisis, as well as give back to The Jewish Agency that supports ITC.

The digital unit has also helped to transform the annual Bible Quiz into a virtual opportunity. This was achieved by harnessing technological solutions to overcome the concerns of authenticity in the pre-tests and the live broadcasting of the quiz.

FORMER SOVIET UNION

In Russia, all activity has gone online as well. The routine spring camps and Jewish Sunday schools - among other programs - had to adjust to this new reality and in just a week, digital tools were utilized for continuing their important educational work. These activities allowed many to continue engaging in their weekly routine of studying, meeting friends and enjoying fun activities while at home, despite the negative effects of this crisis.

The St. Petersburg Youth Department used the situation as an opportunity to create a new and exciting project that provided a camp experience through online sessions. On March 25, MEZUZA.ONLINE opened its virtual doors and welcomed its participants in this first-of-its-kind program which integrated many online platforms.

MEZUZA.ONLINE provides its participants with the opportunity to hear lectures from speakers, do morning workouts, enjoy baking, recycle paper, participate in Media Midrash and even build a virtual replica of the St. Petersburg Synagogue.

Simona, 17, was one of the participants and couldn't believe that camp would happen online.

"To my surprise, the camp was amazing! The classes became very interactive and interesting as counselors and participants used more and more Zoom capabilities," shared Simona.

“ It was an unbelievably cool experience. I spent this week getting to know my Jewish roots better, learning about Jewish traditions and having a great time with my peers. ”

As there are updates and changes to the coronavirus pandemic daily, we are closely monitoring the situation. We are staying in touch with olim, families at risk, and senior residents of Amigour as well as the many program participants in Israel, including approximately 4,000 who were on Masa Israel experiences. Our offices and teams around the world, and our Shlichim, are identifying and addressing needs as they arise, offering support and solidarity.

As our partners also strive to meet the needs of their local communities and struggle to support their vulnerable populations, we are sending them strength from Israel and around the globe.

When we sit down at home alone or with those in our quarantine for Passover this year, "Ma Nishtana" will really be true in a way that is unlike any other celebration of the holiday. While we may not be together physically, it is crucial we create unity and come together as a family in alternative ways this Passover, through technology or other means. This is no less true for us as a nation; we must find alternative ways to stay connected and together! **This is what The Jewish Agency is all about in routine days, and so we must go the extra mile and increase our efforts even more so these days!**