



EMERGENCY HELP FOR NEEDY ELDERLY JEWS IN THE FSU



THE GLOBAL
JEWISH
9-1-1

CORONAVIRUS
RESPONSE

SUMMER 2020



OVER 80,000 JEWISH ELDERLY DEPEND ON JDC

for basics such as food and medicine all year round. Their pensions are as low as \$2 a day, despite many years working as doctors, engineers or teachers. This reliance only grew with the onset of the pandemic: elderly were unable to leave the house, stores were closed, many items were either in short supply or more expensive, and elderly were isolated from those who could help.

ELDERLY GOT VITAL AND INCREASED FOOD AND MEDICAL HELP



FOOD



**MEDICAL
HELP**



**EMERGENCY CALL
CENTERS AND
HOTLINES**

PROTECTIVE GEAR PROVIDED TO KEEP CARE WORKERS AND CLIENTS SAFE



11,400
Sanitizers, soaps
& wipes



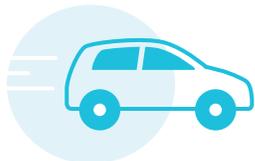
412,000
Gloves, caps, robes &
other protective gear



131,000
Masks



22,000
Calls made to or
from Hased centers



74 Homecare workers
serving hundreds of clients were
provided with transportation



You Helped Needy Jewish Elderly Through the Coronavirus Storm

The coronavirus pandemic has hit hard everywhere. As quarantine, lockdown, protective gear, and essential workers become shared frames of reference, it seems like we're all in the same boat. Yet the heartbreaking truth is that the "corona experience" varies with life situation.

We're not in the same boat, we're in the same storm.

For some 80,000 impoverished Jewish elderly living in the former Soviet Union (FSU), life was bleak well before the pandemic. Due to their desperate poverty and fragile existence, these poor Jewish seniors already relied on JDC for life's basics – food, medicine and help at home. At this time, their dependence grew even more.

Elderly Jews in the FSU are weathering the coronavirus storm in a battered and worn-down boat. With even this basic assistance under threat, they are in clear and present danger. As soon as elderly were identified as an at-risk group, JDC mobilized so they could shelter in place.



Volunteers safely deliver aid to isolated elderly.

You responded to their plight by securing the delivery of life-saving services:

- When elderly couldn't leave their homes, your gift made sure that groceries and medicines were brought to their doors
- When they could no longer go to day centers for hot lunches, they received cooked meals at home
- When homecare workers had no way to get to their clients, you paid for a taxi
- When elderly living alone were cut off from all human contact, volunteers checked in
- When store shelves were all but emptied of masks, gloves and sanitizers, your gift secured supplies for essential care workers.

You are the life jacket buoying FSU's elderly Jews through this volatile storm. On their behalf, JDC thanks you for your commitment to care for those in need.

This report describes the emergency help given during the coronavirus crisis. It also highlights vital community capacities – committed professionals, motivated volunteers and engaged community members – that are the result of JDC's enduring investment in the region.

You Provided Food & Medicine No Matter What

Over 80,000 Jewish elderly depend on JDC for basics such as food and medicine all year round. Their pensions are as low as \$2 a day, despite many years of working as doctors, engineers or teachers. This reliance only grew with the onset of the pandemic: elderly were unable to leave the house, stores were closed, many items were either in short supply or more expensive, and elderly were isolated from those who could help.

You ensured that elderly got vital and increased food and medical help, despite these hurdles. Aware of our clients' high-risk status in regard to coronavirus, JDC organized this support even before national lockdowns were introduced. This action has contributed to the relatively low number of corona cases among our clients.



FOOD Groceries + cooked meals delivered, bankcard advances and extra support



MEDICAL HELP Medication and extra support delivered



REMOTE WORK Equipment and training for remote work to ensure continuous effective care

How You Helped 95-Year-Old Polina

Just a few months ago, 95-year-old **Polina** was the life and soul of her local JDC-supported day center in Novosibirsk, Siberia. She was known to be a wonderful story teller and “the” expert on Yiddish theater. Then, overnight, her life was shut down. Coronavirus did what old age hadn't managed to do – reduce her independence and cut her off from her friends and community.

Now she stays at home 24/7, leaving just once a week for a short walk. This isolation could be paralyzing. But thanks to you, she receives food at home in place of meals at the day center, her homecare worker visits, and volunteers call regularly. For this “youthful” nonagenarian, the human contact is just as important as the physical support.

“They check on my health and if there’s anything I need. It’s so comforting to know I’m not forgotten.”

You Ensured Lifesaving Homecare was Delivered Safely

JDC's homecare workers help elderly with their daily living – cooking, bathing, dressing, and cleaning. Many of our clients are bed-bound and have literally no one else to help them. But protective gear was hard to buy. How could these dedicated homecare workers continue helping even through lockdown?

You provided protective gear so workers would be safe and would not put their clients at risk. In places where public transportation was stopped, you provided private transportation so they could still reach their clients.

These efforts resulted in minimal illness and deaths among the vulnerable elderly – despite their increased level of risk.

Iryna, a homecare worker in Odessa explains: *“To help my clients, I needed to do it safely. But the only sanitizers, gloves or masks in the stores were being sold at exorbitant prices. **Thank you for this protective gear. This is what real care looks like.**”*

New Emergency Hotlines Gave Clear Message: You Are Not Alone

As lockdowns and self-isolation confined elderly to their homes, cutting them off from the outside world, their vulnerability increased, threatening their already fragile physical and emotional wellbeing.

Thanks to you, staff and volunteers were able to remain in touch, monitor thousands of elderly clients, and offer support. New hotlines were launched across the region. A network of staff and trained volunteers regularly made outgoing calls, as well as responding to incoming calls. Together, they offered invaluable social connection, and tracked and responded to seniors' emerging needs and concerns.



NEW EMERGENCY HOTLINES offered practical help to isolated elderly



VOLUNTEERS CALLED elderly at home to help with coronavirus-related needs **Nearly 22,000** calls made to or from Hesed centers



11,400
Sanitizers, soaps & wipes



131,000 Masks



412,000
Gloves, caps, robes & other protective gear



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A FAMILY AFFAIR: When Kishinev's Volunteer Center decided to help Jewish elderly in isolation, 19-year-old Katya was stirred to help too. She coopted her café-owner parents, and reached out to local supermarkets for food supplies. **Now, Katya and her mother cook lunches for local elderly three times a week.** The meals are, of course, delivered by volunteers.

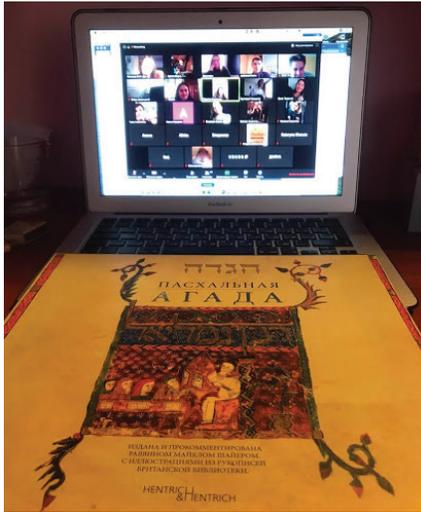
Communities Rose to the Occasion

The Power of Volunteers

While the pandemic made it more challenging to care for needy Jews, it also revealed incredible Jewish community capacities, a clear outcome of JDC's intentional investment in the region. **Thus, thanks to tremendous efforts made by 44 volunteer centers in 8 countries, engaging more than 6,000 FSU Jews, much of the extra help required by the crisis was delivered by volunteers.** For example:

- **Outreach:** Across the FSU, over 500 volunteers regularly called close to 7,000 elderly, asking about their health, offering attentive support.
- **Deliveries:** In Russia and Ukraine, volunteers delivered holiday food packages to hundreds of elderly Jews. In Belarus, volunteers also delivered gardening supplies for seniors in quarantine.
- **Digital Literacy:** Across the FSU, volunteers of all ages helped elderly Jews with technology like Skype, so they could communicate while in quarantine.

Community Engagement



Although in-person JCC and leadership programming was suspended in March, JDC ensured that the community engagement we have invested in over the last decades could continue, by setting up online platforms.

As a result, thousands of Jews of all ages took part in a wide variety of online events and activities. From community Seders to intergenerational exercise classes, from Jewish story hours to Israel discussion groups, **coronavirus couldn't stop Jewish life in the FSU.**

The coronavirus pandemic is an unprecedented emergency. Thank you for your swift and compassionate response.

About JDC

JDC is the leading global Jewish humanitarian organization, working in 70 countries to lift lives and strengthen communities. We rescue Jews in danger, provide aid to vulnerable Jews, develop innovative solution to Israel's most complex social challenges, cultivate a Jewish future, and lead the Jewish community's response to crises. For over 100 years, our work has put the timeless Jewish value of mutual responsibility into action, making JDC essential to the survival of millions of people and the advancement of Jewish life across the globe.

More information can be found at [JDC.org](https://www.jdc.org)



JDC

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