Responding to Global Emergencies

JDC PROGRAM DASHBOARD

GRID Global Response. Innovative Development.
Responding to Global Emergencies

Earthquakes. Tsunamis. Hurricanes. Typhoons. Civil wars. A public health crisis. Each year, the lives of millions of people are altered irrevocably in an instant when natural disasters or other calamities strike — and JDC is the address for a Jewish community response. Leveraging a century of rescue and relief experience and its network of experts and partners, JDC deploys a response to humanitarian crises worldwide through its GRID (Global Response. Innovative Development.) program. JDC is also advancing sustainable development opportunities via Israeli innovations, and partnering with local Jewish communities to serve the broader world through acts of tikkun olam.

Disaster Response

Over the last decade, JDC’s disaster relief teams have improved the lives of people hard-hit by natural disasters in Haiti (2010), Japan (2011), the Philippines (2013), and Nepal (2015). We deliver emergency aid and develop long-term recovery programs to rebuild the lives and livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable people impacted. We also strengthen fragile communities so they can better withstand future emergencies. Critical partnerships with Israeli and international NGOs, local agencies, and Jewish communities maximize impact and strengthen ties among people in crisis, Jewish communities, and Israel.

Most recently, JDC has provided aid to victims of earthquakes in Ecuador and in Hindu-Kush, floods in Sri Lanka, a typhoon in the Philippines, and the September 2017 hurricanes in the Caribbean and central Mexico earthquake.

JDC’s disaster relief programs are made possible by special appeals of the Jewish Federations of North America and the generosity of tens of thousands of individuals.

Utilizing Israeli Innovations and Expertise to Advance Development Goals

Tikkun Olam Ventures (TOV) helps poor smallholder farmers in developing countries by tapping into market-based solutions and proven Israeli know-how. TOV’s approach is to help lift these farmers out of poverty and hunger, empower women in rural communities, and bolster economic growth. Through TOV’s revolving philanthropic loan fund, farmers in need can purchase Israeli AgTech—hybrid seeds and drip irrigation. With increased crop yields and sales, farmers will be able to repay loans, infusing the fund with new dollars that can provide loans to farmers in other locations. TOV’s two-year pilot phase will launch in Ethiopia in 2018-19.

JDC is also expanding its use of Israeli expertise in existing programs in Ethiopia that are strengthening water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) infrastructure, and enhancing local training programs in midwifery, nursing, and medicine. Under the leadership of Medical Director Dr. Rick Hodes, JDC will continue to provide lifesaving spinal surgeries to children in need.
Partnering with Jewish Communities on Tikkun Olam Initiatives

Alleviating suffering and helping vulnerable people is a fundamental expression of Jewish values and global Jewish citizenship.

Increasingly, local Jewish communities in many of the countries where JDC works are on the front lines of social action initiatives that support their neighbors in times of need.

JDC partners alongside these communities to advise on best development practices, connect and convene local players, and serve as a seed funder of these tikkun olam activities. We currently support or facilitate Jewish community projects aiding the needy—children in slums, refugees, disaster survivors, and the poor—in countries like India, Bulgaria, the Philippines, and Argentina.

A Global Address for Disaster Relief and Development

JDC coordinates its relief activities with the U.S. Department of State, USAID, the Israeli government, Interaction, and the United Nations, as well as local and international partners. JDC often participates in global, regional, and local gatherings of disaster and development experts to advance best practices and the Jewish community’s commitment to improving lives.

Repairing the World with Global Jewish Communities

Before Typhoon Haiyan ravaged the Philippines in November 2013, the island nation’s small Jewish community of about 1,500 largely kept to itself.

But that all changed when JDC showed up to deliver critical post-disaster aid and help sustainably restore livelihoods and rebuild schools.

“Since JDC arrived, our community has radically transformed—we’ve found that by helping others, we not only help them but ourselves,” said Lee Blumenthal, president of the Manila-based Jewish Association of the Philippines. “It’s strengthened our community and opened the eyes of everyone, adults and children, to see that there is a world out there that lives differently from our own.”

Since the typhoon, the Jewish community has partnered its preschool with one in a hard-hit area, and in February, it held a Shabbaton weekend at Mambusao Elementary.
meeting local Filipino partners and participating in a tikkun olam social action project.

Martin Fabraquel, Mambusao’s principal, said it would have been impossible for his community to rebuild the school—now also used as an evacuation site and multipurpose center—without the support of JDC and the local Jewish community.

“It’s those relationships that provide us with the strength to keep providing our children with the best education possible, no matter the situation,” he said. “Knowing there are people who care about our story restores our faith in humanity.”

The school now proudly displays Israeli flags in classrooms and corridors as a symbol of the strength of its bond with the Jewish people.

“When it came to the Philippines, that process wasn’t just about the local Filipino educators and fishermen impacted by the typhoon—it was about Jewish community members ready to come into their own as neighbors, advocates, and volunteers.

“Reaching out to the Jewish Association of the Philippines enabled us to be more impactful together while also engaging in a mutual conversation about the Jewish values that drive our work, like tikkun olam,” Fruchter said. “When we called them, we not only reconnected with a community JDC had previously helped during World War II—we uncovered a community that had become disconnected from the global Jewish world.”

During the Holocaust, more than 1,000 Jews were issued rare travel visas to work in a Jewish family’s cigar factory in Manila—a joint initiative of JDC, the Frieder family, and the country’s then-president, Manuel Quezon.

For Blumenthal, it’s a profound honor for the Jewish community of the Philippines to continue its relationship with JDC—and to be able to distribute aid to its neighbors, not just receive it.

“JDC was there then and it is there now,” he said. “None of this would have been possible without them. Even if we had the will to help out locally, we didn’t have the knowledge of how to go about it. We learned that from JDC; and now we’re active partners in cultivating a Jewish response to disasters.”

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The first call JDC makes when responding to disasters is to local Jewish communities, said Orly Fruchter, JDC’s Philippines coordinator.

Engaging them in emergency relief and ongoing sustainability efforts is a key part of JDC’s international development work. In addition to the relationship in the Philippines, Jewish communities in Peru, Ecuador, and Macedonia were key pieces of JDC’s responses to those countries’ recent natural disasters.

JDC is committed to responding to emergencies on behalf of Jews worldwide, integrating best-in-class global, Israeli, and local expertise and providing opportunities for local partners to become empowered, too.

JDC receives significant funding support from Jewish Federations across North America through cooperation with JFNA and UIA Canada. Major funding partners also include: the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, the Maurice and Vivienne Wohl Charitable Foundation, the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, World Jewish Relief (UK), and tens of thousands of generous individual donors and foundations. The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews is a major operational partner.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is the world’s leading Jewish humanitarian assistance organization. JDC works in some 70 countries and in Israel to alleviate hunger and hardship, rescue Jews in danger, create lasting connections to Jewish life, and provide immediate relief and long-term development support for victims of natural and man-made disasters. To learn more, visit JDC.org.