



Shana Tova!

Dear partners and friends,

Rosh Hashana 5781
September 2020

As you know, we just passed the half-year mark in the global health, economic, and social crisis which is driven by COVID-19. In face of the scope and ramifications of the crisis, we at the Rashi Foundation mobilized to assist many of the most vulnerable families in Israel, while re-evaluating our strategic priorities and methods going forward.

During the civil lockdown, we united with numerous partners in providing urgently-needed relief to families who were ill-equipped to weather the crisis alone. We distributed food vouchers, hygiene products, games for children, and computers to several thousand families in dozens of locales throughout Israel's socioeconomic periphery. We also developed online solutions for uninterrupted operation of a myriad of welfare and education programs run by the Rashi network of organizations.

On behalf of the many thousands of children and adults who benefitted from this effort, we wish to thank you, our partners, from the bottom of our hearts. Your partnership is not to be taken for granted under these sudden and extreme conditions, which affected your own communities as well as Israel.

Our commitment to our beneficiaries does not end with crisis relief. We will continue the drive to generate large-scale social mobility in the periphery, a need which is magnified by the COVID-19 crisis. Our partnerships with the philanthropic, government, and professional communities have therefore become more important than ever. Facing widening social gaps and deepening challenges, we are now tailoring our initiatives to the social distancing restrictions that will extend into the foreseeable future, as you can read below.

We hope that the new year will inspire us all to enhance our solidarity and social strength. May we all learn to be more sensitive to the needs of those who cannot escape the cycle of disadvantage on their own, and may we continue to apply our collective resources and abilities to make Israel's periphery a better place to live.

Wishing all of you a year of good tidings and health,

Francois Leven
President

Michal Cohen
General Director

Answering Urgent Social Needs during the COVID-19 Crisis



Computers for Families with None

Together with our partners in the philanthropic and business sectors, including Ben and Esther Rosenbloom Foundation, CEJP, Geller Family Foundation, Gerald and Gail Ronson Family Foundation, Google, JCF-LA, Merage Israel Foundation, PPSNI, Samuels Family Foundation, Seed the Dream Foundation, Tami Steinmetz Foundation, and UJA Federation of Greater Toronto, Rashi purchased and distributed one computer or tablet to each of over 2,800 qualified families who cannot afford even one. The devices allow the families to remain in close contact with social workers and therapists, and they enable children to keep up with online schoolwork as equals with their classmates. Young children received tablets, and children over 10 received laptops.

The impact of this effort is reflected in the results of a survey of recipient families: 75% of respondents used the devices for distance learning at least four days per week, 73% also used them for recreation during the seemingly endless downtime at home, and nearly 80% said their children felt equal to their classmates and that the atmosphere at home improved.



Employment

Among the hundreds of thousands of Israelis who wish to return to work under the sudden and extreme rise in unemployment are large numbers of young adults from disadvantaged backgrounds. They must undergo professional re-training and acquire new skills for positions that function under COVID-19 social distancing restrictions. Similar measures are needed for large numbers of Israelis who did not lose their jobs, but who need to adapt to working from home and other dramatic changes in the workplace. Our efforts in this area are part of our ongoing work to narrow the employment gap between central Israel and the periphery.



Employment Zone

This is a joint initiative with the government's Employment Service. It applies a new, holistic approach based on a comprehensive view of employment opportunities and obstacles in any locale, as well as an online network of local employers, job seekers, and training services. Emphasis is on assistance to young adults in building long-term career paths, and on development of training programs geared to the emerging market of future-oriented job opportunities and professions.



Coalitions for the advancement of policy

We take part in the leadership of these multi-sectoral coalitions that work to bring change to employment policy. Examples include 'The Springboard,' which presses for wide-ranging reforms in professional training programs, and 'Outsight,' which initiates innovative pilot programs for training, placement, flexible employment, and lifelong learning. Oversight hopes to bring these pilots to successful fruition and to have them adopted by the government for implementation at the national level.



Post-secondary education for young people at risk

This initiative is in partnership with JDC-Ashalim and the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services. We are developing an organization to advise and guide young people at risk who seek post-secondary education and gainful employment. It assists them through courses needed to complete their bagrut (high school matriculation) exams or professional certification courses, and it provides academic and financial aid for those who seek a bachelor's degree. The latter is in partnership with the Mifal HaPaysis national lottery.



Strengthening of Cities and Rural Councils

The infrastructure, services, and opportunities located in nearby surroundings have tremendous impact on the lives of that area's residents. This is true during routine times, and all the more so under emergency or crisis conditions such as the current pandemic. Field personnel have the best understanding of the needs of the local population, and of the most effective ways to provide them with access to the services they need.



Regional STEM Ecosystems

This enterprise is facilitated through Rashi's City at the Center initiative, which is now empowering seven municipalities to generate social mobility for their own residents. One of the main programs being implemented through City at the Center is STEM Ecosystems, which offer science and technology education, R&D, and '21st century' learning and job skills for young residents. We are working to expand the scope of this effort, aiming to spark regional STEM development in clusters of local and rural councils. The first manifestation of this is our recent agreement with Eshkol Bet Hakerem, a group of seven municipalities and local councils in the Galilee that includes Karmiel. The agreement will enable us to establish a tailored regional STEM Ecosystem for education and economic development, which will benefit the residents of Eshkol Bet Hakerem.



Local leadership

This program aims to cultivate young, highly qualified local leaders in the periphery. It centers on a training program that will enable talented and motivated young adult residents to form a network of people capable of driving positive change in their home locale. A pilot is being run in Bet She'an, aiming to bring graduates into positions of influence in strengthening that city's socioeconomic fabric.



Domestic Violence

Since the advent of the COVID-19 crisis, there has been a major increase in physical danger to the most vulnerable and at-risk people in Israel. Especially disturbing is the skyrocketing number of cases of domestic violence in the periphery. Rashi and its partners are making the following adaptations in order to effectively meet the rising demand for interventions.



Digital tools

There is an acute need to locate victims and provide them with treatment and assistance, but there is significant difficulty in doing so due to COVID-19 restrictions. As such, we have joined with the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services and the JDC Institute for Leadership and Governance (ELKA) in developing an online platform for prevention and treatment of domestic violence. A central database is being established to draw information from the Ministries of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services, Health, and Public Security (police). Digital tools are being developed to analyze the data and identify potential victims in advance, offer them personalized assistance, and build a coordinated continuum of treatments and services offered by diverse organizations.



Centers for Prevention, Treatment, and Counseling for Victims of Domestic Violence

As per the recent decision by the government's Inter-Ministerial Committee on Prevention and Treatment of Domestic Violence, these regional Centers will be established throughout Israel. Funded by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services, the National Insurance Institute, and other partners, these Centers will provide victims with a full range of counseling and guidance services in working with the police, the legal system, and physical and emotional health services. They will tailor assistance portfolios to the specific needs of each victim and family, consolidating the full range of services available during the domestic violence crisis and its aftermath. The Centers will offer these services and temporary emergency shelter under one roof.



Knowledge Map

The Knowledge Map is a joint research venture between Rashi, the ERI Institute, JDC-Ashalim, Jindas (an NGO promoting social mobility through community-based urban regeneration), Yated (a national program for advancement of at-risk youth), and the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services. It aims to focus efforts and maximize impact in designing policy to generate social mobility, deciding the ideal mix of investments, and choosing the best method to evaluate results in the field. We recently unveiled the Knowledge Map to key stakeholders in the social sector, emphasizing its added value in maximizing the return on their investments in social mobility ventures.

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