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American Jewish
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Committee



JDC'S EMERGENCY RESPONSE IN UKRAINE

Providing Humanitarian Aid to Vulnerable Jews



Prepared for:
Jewish Federation of the East Bay
REPORT | UKRAINE

A JDC employee (in white hardhat) continues to work amidst the crisis in Kiev.

Jewish Communities in Ukraine

(Estimated Jewish Populations; Source: JDC)



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JDC is grateful to the Jewish Federation of the East Bay for supporting the provision of urgent and supplementary humanitarian assistance to our brethren during the current emergency in Ukraine.

Just a month after the election of Petro Poroshenko and the consequent outbreak of violence in Donetsk, the turmoil in Ukraine continues to bring hardship upon the country's most vulnerable Jews. Impoverished elderly and disadvantaged children who struggled daily to survive prior to the crisis now face higher prices for foods and medications, an unstable economy, widespread violence and disorder, and an uncertain political future. These challenges have made the plight of destitute Ukrainian Jews all the more desperate. Intervention on the part of the global Jewish community is their lifeline – now more than ever.

JDC operates 32 Hesed Relief Centers across Ukraine, through which impoverished Jewish elderly and at-risk children and their families have been receiving essential care for years. These centers have continued to operate throughout the crisis, and have had to expand services to meet the increased need for vital material and emotional support that the crisis has caused.

Thanks to generous support from the Federation system, JDC's emergency response in Ukraine is providing uninterrupted, and wherever necessary, supplemental welfare services throughout the crisis to impoverished elderly Jews, and at-risk children and their families. This report presents JDC's efforts since it launched its emergency response in Ukraine in March, 2014.

UKRAINIAN JEWS FACE INCREASED HARDSHIP

Prior to the Crisis: Poverty-Stricken Elderly and Children

The depth of poverty and dearth of government services in Ukraine leaves the country's most vulnerable residents struggling against impossibly harsh circumstances. Thousands of elderly Jews live below subsistence levels – having no savings or assets, they cannot survive on their pitifully low pensions. In addition to poverty, many of these aging Jews suffer from illness, limited mobility, deplorable housing, and heartbreaking isolation.

The lives of impoverished Jewish children in Ukraine are no easier to comprehend. Unemployment and underemployment, single-parent families, and inadequate social assistance has young children living in wretched housing without running water, electricity or heat; bearing hunger and foregoing medical care; and enduring freezing winters without proper clothing.

In the Midst of the Crisis: Heightened Challenges, Heightened Needs

The turmoil in Ukraine has compounded the hardships endured by these vulnerable members of society, and increased their needs for material and emotional support. Some of the most daunting challenges include the following:

- Prices of basic foods have risen, with increases of 7% on milk, eggs and cheese, 20% on rice and flour, and 55% on cabbage
- Cost of gas has increased by 20% since February
- Availability of imported medicines is decreasing while the prices of locally produced medications are steadily increasing, some by 70%
- Ukrainian banks in Crimea are not operating to capacity
- Waves of violence and general disorder has destabilized residents' sense of security and of being in control of their lives

The political unrest in Ukraine brings with it challenges beyond increased financial and emotional strain. For example, a significant number of elderly clients – many of whom suffered greatly during World War Two, survived Stalin's Russia, and witnessed the fall of Communism – are experiencing physical and psychological symptoms of trauma in response to the conflict, which for many evokes memories of a terrible past. Their intense anxiety is in turn leading to increased stress-related health issues such as heart problems, somatization and insomnia.

JDC'S ONGOING EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Thanks to the generous support from North American Jewish Federations and others across the globe, JDC is able to respond to the increased needs of those dependent on our services. As JDC's long standing partners, the Federation system has played a key role in assisting Ukrainian Jews who have been affected by the emergency to receive supplementary assistance to maintain their previous minimal standard of living, and to cope with the stress caused by the crisis. This section details the expanded services that JDC's 32 Hesed Relief Centers have provided in March, April and May to meet clients' increased needs.

Supplementary Welfare Assistance

In addition to providing regular services to its 69,000 clients, JDC has provided expanded food aid and SOS services¹ to **36,733** clients identified as being extremely vulnerable and significantly affected by the crisis. This number also includes clients who do not receive regular food assistance from Hesed but who were deemed eligible for assistance due to the emergency. JDC quickly learned that the most efficient way to support clients is to increase food aid provided through bank cards or food cards. JDC's expanded coverage of food costs enables clients to use their limited incomes to pay for increasingly expensive medications and utility bills.

Central and Western Ukraine Region

- 10,739 elderly clients received an additional \$5 - \$25
- 928 children and their families received an additional \$20 - \$31

Odessa and South Ukraine/Crimea Region

- 4,533 elderly clients received an additional \$15 - \$25
- 1,425 children and their families received an additional \$10 - \$35

North-East Ukraine Region

- 6,063 elderly clients received an additional \$5 - \$25
- 674 children and their families received an additional \$15 - \$30

East Ukraine Region

- 10,793 elderly clients received an additional \$10 - \$25
- 1,578 children and their families received an additional \$15 - \$30

¹JDC's SOS program provides assistance to meet unexpected needs of elderly clients beyond the routine services that they receive. SOS covers expenditures including emergency medical services, home repairs, purchases of appliances, and funeral expenses.



Security at Hesed Centers and JCCs

Hesed Centers and JCCs in areas most affected by the conflict have increased security measures. This includes employing more security guards and expanding their hours, sometimes overnight, as well as purchasing additional fire extinguishers and first aid kits.

Trauma Training for Jewish Community Workers

As the conflict bears on, additional needs beyond those of security are emerging in the field – needs for a response to psychological trauma.

Throughout the unfolding of the crisis, JDC has continued to provide essential homecare services to homebound elderly clients, even increasing homecare hours for several clients in downtown Kiev during the riots. While JDC is also providing supplementary homecare service, the emergence of two real-time, crisis-related needs made it clear that a different strategy would also provide an effective response.

The first such need was related to the fact that Hesed clients, both elderly and children, were showing symptoms of trauma and post-traumatic stress, but local Jewish community workers had no professional trauma training and were unequipped to properly respond. **These workers needed training in trauma response in order to provide more effective care for their clients during this crisis.**

The second pressing need was that Jewish community workers were coping with the same stressful or traumatic situations as their clients while bearing the burden of having to stay strong and provide support to clients – while being professionally unprepared to do so. These workers were thus experiencing their own symptoms of trauma while also dealing with mounting professional burn-out from being unable to adequately treat their clients' trauma-related needs, and unceasingly stressful circumstances. **The workers were in desperate need of psychological support and trauma counseling to cope with their own stress and continue working.**

To respond to these urgent needs, JDC brought in professionals from the Israel Trauma Coalition for Response and Preparedness (ITC) to facilitate four series of Trauma Support Workshops for Jewish community workers based in Kiev, Odessa, Kharkov, Dnepropetrovsk, and their surrounding areas. **An additional series of trauma support trainings is being supported by your Federation through the JFNA Ukraine Assistance Fund.**

In these workshops, **294** homecare workers and other community professionals first received counseling and practical guidance to help them cope with their own anxieties, emotions and stress. Following this, the ITC conducted seminars on identifying and treating symptoms of stress and trauma in children and the elderly, and taught techniques for providing emotional support and coping in emergency situations. The ITC also ran a seminar on setting up and operating a crisis hotline, assessing the needs of callers, and providing initial assistance over the phone.

Following the Trauma Support Workshops, participants reported feeling a reduction in anxiety, stress and negative emotions. They also reported feeling better able to cope with their own experiences and those of their clients. One participant said that the night following a workshop in which she received counseling was the first night she had slept since the outbreak of the crisis. In addition to a bolstered emotional state, participants left the workshops with information and tools that will improve their work. The impact of both these aspects of the workshops will reach thousands of clients who will benefit from more resilient caregivers who are able to offer more effective care.

Emergency Relief Family Retreats

To provide badly-needed relief from the negative effects of constant turmoil and strain, JDC is preparing four Emergency Relief Family Retreats for families most affected by the crisis. These retreats are slated to run in June, though the increased unrest in and around Dnepropetrovsk may lead to rescheduling one or two of the retreats. Together, the four retreats will offer **400** participants from affected regions three-to-four days of Jewishly-themed leisure and educational activities.

The goal is to provide participants with therapeutic support, stress-relief, and resilience-building experiences, within a Jewish community context. Emphases will include finding and using personal and communal resources to deal with stress, and connecting to the community for comfort, strength and support.

HELPING THE HELPERS

Natalia Veba, 44, has been a Hesed homecare worker in Kiev since 2012. During the worst of the fighting in Kiev, Natalia's heart went out to her helpless elderly homecare clients. She knew that they were alone in their homes, listening to shooting outside their windows. Even though it was difficult for her to reach their homes, Natalia continued to visit them.

During the violence in Maidan, Natalia saw the dead body of a fighter. The image froze her in her tracks and burned itself into her mind. For weeks after, she found herself weeping from the memory. She suffered greatly during this time – and yet continued to work. But her strength was wearing down under the burden of her trauma.

Natalia participated in the Trauma Support Workshops, through which she received psychological support and methods for coping with her stress and emotions. She says that although she still cries a lot, she is able to calm herself and regain her sense of control. This is a skill she is now able to share with her clients.

MEASUREMENT AND OUTCOMES

The goal of JDC's emergency response is to provide uninterrupted and supplemental welfare services throughout the crisis to impoverished elderly Jews, and at-risk children and their families. This is a short-term goal which seeks to answer immediate needs, and JDC evaluates its progress – and the impact of this progress for beneficiaries of services – accordingly.

To evaluate its progress and impact, JDC is reviewing both quantitative and qualitative data.

- Quantitative data includes: numbers of clients receiving welfare services; numbers of services provided; number of Trauma Support Workshops run and number of participants in each; number of retreats and number of participants in each.
- Qualitative data includes: first-hand reports by Hesed Center clients; interviews of Jewish community workers; feedback from ITC staff; interviews of retreat staff; and questionnaires filled out by workshop and retreat participants.

Multi-Level Outcomes

The anticipated outcomes of JDC's emergency response are listed in the following table. JDC's Director of the FSU Division for Planning and Program Development, Ayelet Tal, is managing the data collection and evaluation, as well as the outcome measurements. The process is ongoing and will continue throughout the duration of JDC's emergency response – which will remain in place for as long as necessary. In addition, JDC will be conducting formal evaluations of the Trauma Support Workshops and the Emergency Relief Family Retreats with the assistance of the Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute.²

Outcomes for Clients	Outcomes for Jewish Community Workers	Outcomes for JDC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain food security and access to other vital welfare services • Maintain access to essential community support • Improve sense of security • Reduce anxiety, stress and symptoms of trauma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve effectiveness in treating clients with trauma-related concerns • Improve ability to respond in emergency • Reduce anxiety, stress, and symptoms of trauma • Reduce professional burn-out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain standard of welfare services in an emergency situation • Improve ability to operate in emergency situations

² The Myers-JDC-Brookdale Institute is a leading Israeli center for applied research on social policy and services, serving Israel, the Jewish world, and the international community.

CLIENT STORIES



Larisa Kucherenko and her son Dima, 12, live in Slavyansk, in the Donetsk region of Eastern Ukraine. For them, the political crisis has turned their lives upside down.

Prior to the crisis, Dima's father paid child support. Shortly after the conflict erupted, he was laid off and is no longer able to provide for his son. Larisa too worked before the crisis, as a cook in a health resort. Today the resort is closed, employees have been instructed not to come in but have also not been officially dismissed, thereby barring them from registering at the state employment center. The family currently has no income outside of the support they receive from JDC.

Larisa and Dima often hear shots outside their home and see armed people walking in the streets. They are afraid to go outside. Dima has stopped going to school and Larisa is too scared to go shopping, only leaving the house when necessary. She says she feels scared and depressed, facing an insecure, frightening present and an uncertain future.

For Larisa and Dima, the supplementary emergency assistance they received from JDC in April felt like rescue. With the extra money JDC put on her bank card, Larisa braved a shopping trip and stocked up on flour, grains and canned goods. The family will also be receiving an emergency food package.

In response to this life-saving assistance, Larisa says, ***"I want to express my gratitude to the people who have ensured that we receive additional support during these difficult times. We don't know what will happen tomorrow. In such unstable times, it is comforting to feel the care of people who are so far away, but close to us in spirit."***



Yelena Rakovskaya, 87, is a widow and bereaved mother who lives alone in a damp, windowless basement apartment in Odessa. Her only source of income is her monthly pension of \$96. Suffering from numerous health complications including a damaged spinal cord, heart disease and high blood pressure, Yelena has limited mobility and spends most of her time in bed. She also spends most of her time alone, since she has no living children and no relatives nearby. Grieving and depressed, her only real solace is the time she spends with her JDC-provided homecare worker.

When the crisis erupted, Yelena was struck with soul-quaking anxiety. Born in Odessa in 1926, she was 15 when the Nazi occupation began. Her family was not evacuated, and suffered under Nazi rule until the Red Army liberated the city in 1944. The current upheaval in Odessa has brought back traumatic memories, which only heighten Yelena's terrible anxiety.

Yelena's homecare worker has not missed a single hour of work throughout the emergency, and has provided comfort and calm even in the worst moments. Yelena has continued to receive essential welfare services such as food aid and medications. She also received an Emergency Food Set in April to help her weather the storm.

Yelena says, ***"This package of food is a sign from my beloved Hesus that they remember me. It seems like a small thing, but it eases my worries in these frightening times."***



BUDGET

JDC has been implementing a comprehensive welfare program for elderly and at-risk children and their families in Ukraine since the early 1990s. In 2014, the projected welfare budget for Ukraine is over \$53m. Since the onset of the crisis, additional funding has been necessary to provide urgent supplemental welfare and other services to JDC's most vulnerable clients in the following areas:

- **North-East Ukraine:** Kharkov, Sumy, Poltava, Shostka, Konotop, Mirgorod
- **Eastern Ukraine:** Dnepropetrovsk, Krivoy Rog, Zaporozhie, Kremenchug, Donetsk, Lugansk, Kramatorsk, Melitopol, Mariupol
- **Central and Western Ukraine:** Kiev, Zhitomir, Cherkassy, Chernigov, Vinnitsa, Lvov, Chernovtsky, Khmeinitiski, Uzhgorod, Ivano-Frankovsk, Lutsk, Rovno
- **Odessa and Southern Ukraine/ Crimea:** Nikolaev, Kherson, Odessa, Feodosia, Kirovograd, Sevastopol, Simferopol

The table on the following page presents the allocated budget from March through May, and the utilized budget from March and April.

Please note that the crisis in Ukraine is ongoing and JDC will continue to seek support to implement supplementary emergency services as long as is necessary.

Services	North-East Ukraine	Eastern Ukraine	Central and Western Ukraine	Odessa and Southern Ukraine	Allocated/ Utilized Budget
Material Support	\$110,744	\$293,050	\$420,321	\$97,075	\$921,190
SOS	\$5,608	\$15,814	\$44,863	\$22,672	\$88,957
Security	-	\$2,000	\$11,000	\$2,500	\$15,500
Trauma Workshops	\$16,250	\$16,250	\$16,250	\$16,250	\$65,000
Emergency Relief Family Retreats	-	\$15,000	\$15,000	-	\$30,000
Total Allocated *March-May	\$132,602	\$342,114	\$507,434	\$138,497	\$1,120,647
Total Utilized **March-April	\$115,592	\$198,378	\$406,464	\$89,586	\$810,020

* Total Allocated indicates funds that have been released to the field offices to implement emergency programs.

** Total Utilized indicates actual utilization of allocated funds in March and April. Data regarding the utilization of funds for May will be available at the end of June 2014.



THANK YOU

More than 20 years of strong Federation support for JDC's work in the former Soviet Union enabled the creation of the infrastructure required to respond to both the day-to-day needs on the ground, as well as to those that emerge in times of emergency. Deep understanding of the importance of Jewish collective responsibility, together with the Federation system's commitment to supporting this responsibility, continues to ensure that JDC can be there for Ukraine's Jews during this ongoing crisis.

With the outbreak of the current emergency in Ukraine, JDC's well-established presence in the field enabled us to act immediately to address the acute needs of distressed local Jews. Your support helped ensure the provision of essential and expanded welfare services to impoverished elderly Jews and children throughout the crisis; while also bolstering the abilities of the brave Jewish communal workers in Ukraine by providing them with tools to address the needs of their clients during these times of grave uncertainty.

The support from the Jewish Federation of the East Bay has been essential to JDC's response. Thank you for working together with us to ensure that the wellbeing of the most vulnerable Jews in Ukraine is not left to the mercy of fate.



FROM OUR ARCHIVES

JDC provided material relief to Jews in what is now the former Soviet Union, even after its expulsion from the region in 1939 and before its reentry in 1989. This photo portrays some of 300,000 relief packages sent to Russia by JDC in 1945.

<http://archives.jdc.org/>

ABOUT JDC

Since 1914, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) has given global expression to the principle that all Jews are responsible for one another. Working today in over 70 countries, JDC acts on behalf of North America's Jewish communities and others worldwide to rescue Jews in danger, provide relief to those in distress, revitalize overseas Jewish communities, and help Israel overcome the social challenges of its most vulnerable citizens. JDC also provides non-sectarian emergency relief and long-term development assistance worldwide. More information can be found at www.jdc.org.

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