

## ICEJ NETHERLANDS REPORT

Project Category: Israel in Crisis

Reporting period: January – June 2024

Date of submission: August 2024

### Section 1: Breakdown of supported projects

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#### No. Project

- 1 Renovation of 5 bomb shelters in Ma'alot Tarshiha.
- 2 Lahav Farm: Support 2 first responder groups.
- 3 Gymboree Kibbutz Alumim – this is in progress.
- 4 Nir Yitzhak Kibbutz, support of child/parent outing.

### Section 2: Impact of projects

#### Renovations of 5 bomb shelters in Ma'a lot Tarshiha

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The city of Ma'alot-Tarshiha is a municipal merger of the Arab town of Tarshiha and the Jewish town of Ma'alot, creating a unique type of Israeli mixed city. With the city lying 7 kilometers from Lebanon and the risk of war in the North growing every day, preparedness in the region could mean life or death for those in the community.

The State Comptroller, Matanyahu Englman, said on October 17 that there are serious deficiencies in the preparedness of northern towns and communities in the event of a war with the Hezbollah terror group in Lebanon. The comptroller's main criticisms were a lack of adequate bomb shelters, the poor state of maintenance of existing shelters, and severe strains on volunteer civilian security teams operating in the region.

Thanks to your support, 5 bomb shelters in Ma'alot-Tarshiha have been beautifully renovated. The community was ecstatic upon hearing of the renovations as the government did not have the funds to renovate these shelters. This support has a significant long-term impact by ensuring the safety of thousands of families in the community both present and future.

As seen in the photos, these shelters have been completely transformed and are now fit for families to take shelter in.

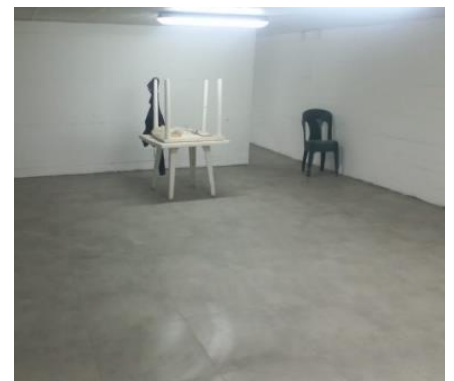
#### Examples of renovations:



*Before – ventilation issues, poor maintenance*



*After*





*Before*



*After*

### **Lahav Farm - Trauma Treatment for Two First Response Teams**

Through your support, we were able to fund an innovative trauma treatment project based in Lahav Farm.

Nir Amitai, the co-founder of the Lahav Farm, highlighted the importance of already considering the aftermath of the conflict, even amidst the ongoing battles to prevent a mental health crisis.

“Suddenly, October 7 happened,” he stated. “We realized that while they are fighting, we must think about the day after the war. Many will come back with PTSD.”

Reflecting on the support received from ICEJ, Nir was grateful. “Thanks to you, we can help people return to normal life. It’s not a quick process; it’s a journey. We cannot do it alone. With your support, we are not alone. Words cannot describe what I feel. Thank you so much.”

“I’m doing it so that I can have a normal life,” Nir added. “It’s not a choice. It’s what God told me to do.”



Visiting the farm, the ICEJ team felt an immediate sense of peace. Sheep, dogs, and even a peacock roam freely, adding to the serene atmosphere.

"Coming here has been a lifeline. The peace and support I've found at the farm have helped me start to rebuild my life after the trauma I experienced," shared a first responder from Sderot.

The farm offers various activities, from working with animals to gardening, all aimed at healing. Amir, the clinical manager, emphasized, “We are teaching people how to deal with grief, loss, and anger. It’s about learning to live life after trauma.”

Nir expressed gratitude for ICEJ’s support: “Many didn’t believe in the original idea, but ICEJ did. Much of what’s happening here is because of them.” With plans for expansion, including two new farms in the Gaza border region, the vision remains to create a sustainable, inclusive model of trauma treatment, offering hope and renewal to countless individuals.

**Feedback from previous response team visits:**

*The work with this group focused on emphasizing their ability to return to a routine after the extreme events they experienced on October 7. During the process, the participants shared what they were going through, discussed complex issues such as feelings of guilt, and focused on how to grow from the trauma. After the end of the process, the group members arrived with their families to the farm for a visit. We quickly understood the need, and we are working on building another processing group that will integrate the spouses of the group into the treatment process.*

*There was a lot of confusion and guilt surrounding all that happened. Though they couldn’t share in-depth all that took place with this group, we did hear that a lot of good things happened around the evening campfire which brought clarity and helped them deal with the many complex feelings that they struggled with in the aftermath.*

Below is a recent film and [here](#) you can find the article on the project and its impact.



**Gymboree Kibbutz Alumim [Status: Under Construction]**

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We are grateful for your generous donation to Kibbutz Alumim. Your support is instrumental in funding the creation of a new Gymboree and Parent-Child Experience Space. This facility is vital for providing a safe and nurturing environment where families can spend quality time together, aiding in their recovery from trauma and restoring a sense of normalcy.

The Sdot Negev region, where Kibbutz Alumim is located, faces constant security threats. Residents have only 15 seconds to seek shelter during a terror attack. This dire situation was exacerbated on October 7th, when a tragic attack claimed the lives of 34 people and injured 10 others, including both citizens and foreign nationals.





*Wreckage from Kibbutz Alumim – Oct. 7<sup>th</sup>*

Currently, the new Gymboree is in the construction phase. Once operational, it will be open on weekdays and evenings, catering to young families with children aged 0-5. The Gymboree will provide a family support system with professionals who can observe children and detect signs of developmental, emotional, social, and physical issues early on. This early detection will help promptly connect parents with community resources.

Your contribution is crucial in helping these families regain stability and continue their lives despite the ongoing threats. We sincerely thank you for your support of this vital project.



*The photos are for illustration only*



## Parent/children therapeutic retreat (Nir Yitzhak)

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Nir Yitzhak, the largest kibbutz in the southern Eshkol Regional Council, was home to approximately 600 people. On October 7, 2023, terrorists infiltrated the kibbutz, resulting in the murder of eight community members, the kidnapping of an entire family, and severe injuries to two older members. This attack left their homes destroyed and their sense of security shattered. The trauma from this event raised doubts about their ability to return and rebuild their lives here.

The project "Parents and Children Returning Home Together" aims to strengthen the bonds between parents and children who endured this traumatic period. By providing a transformative 2-day trip experience, we are promoting community cohesion and preparing families for their return home. The journey has helped participants address shared challenges, fostering trust and connection.

With your support, the organization is able to organize a two-day overnight trip for parents and children to prepare them for returning home and equip them with coping tools. The trips catered to two groups: children aged 4-6 and their parents, and children aged 7-11 and their parents, in the Emek HaMaayanot region.

The timetable for each trip will include fun activities such as hiking and games, as well as psychological exercises targeting specific subjects in the community.

These trips, held in the Emek HaMaayanot region, cater to children aged 4-6 and 7-11 and their parents. The itinerary includes fun activities like hiking and games, and psychological exercises targeting specific community needs. These shared experiences bring emotional healing, and foster communication and a sense of unity among families.

"It was simply amazing!" said Rona Minaker, Projects Coordinator. "The journey was very significant and empowering for both the families themselves and the community. Throughout the day, there were joint tasks for parents and children, and in the evening, the children prepared dinner for the parents and welcomed them to eat together."

Rona continued, "Some of the children who participated lost their parents on October 7th. Some lost beloved uncles from the community and friends from school, and they all experienced the terrifying hours of that day and are still refugees, far from their homes. The Nir Yitzhak community is going to split up in the coming year until they return home, which will take about another year."

"This trip reminded everyone of the joy of being together, of our personal and communal strengths, and it greatly strengthened the personal connections between the children and the adults, and of course, the bond between parents and children. It was very, very significant, especially during this time we are in. Even those who did not go were excited to see the pictures from the trip, and there was a lot of curiosity about it."

"Thank you so very much for understanding the importance of this journey for us and for supporting this project. A big hug on behalf of all the families of Nir Yitzhak. And we hope to do more of these trips."

**Quotes from mothers after the trip:**

Mariel: "We got a chance to go for a weekend in nature, just the two of us. It's a gift I couldn't ask for these days. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for bringing us closer and providing these special connecting moments."

Shani: "I took part in this journey with 10-year-old Noga and Mika. It was a wonderful and extremely empowering journey, both on the personal level of the connection between me and the girls and on the level of our community and togetherness. We were blessed with 24 hours of soul cleansing, and connection, all while experiencing many moments of laughter and joy. The three of us enjoyed every moment. Thank you for this privilege."



**To our dear friends in the Netherlands,**

**We want to express our special thanks for your support.**

**Your generosity and solidarity with Israel have made a significant difference, and we are deeply grateful for your commitment to encouraging and comforting the people of Israel in these difficult days.**

**Thank you for supporting our aid work and for making a lasting impact.**

**Warm Regards,**



**Nicole Y. Yoder  
VP AID & Aliyah  
International Christian Embassy Jerusalem**