

TRANSFORMING DEVASTATION INTO OPPORTUNITY

# **REBUILDING THE GALILEE**

AUGUST 2006

## Executive Summary

We no longer need speculate about the “day after”—it is here. And the damages in the North are vast and widespread. The challenges before the people of Israel are unprecedented. Now time will be our greatest enemy.

Just as we partnered with friends from around the world to move children to safety and to ensure that populations under fire could have their most basic needs met, together we now need to be a driving force in rebuilding the Galilee. We use that term ‘rebuilding’ advisedly.

As we have so many times in our people’s history, we once again stand at a seminal moment. A moment where we have the capacity to transform tragedy into opportunity. Our objective now is not to return Israel’s northern communities to the status quo; but rather to work with Israel’s people to create a new, stronger reality. A more secure future.

As we move forward, we need to recognize that there are two distinct parts to this challenge. Part one is triage.

Close to one-third of Israel’s population has been traumatized—forced to either move life underground or to seek temporary shelter elsewhere. As life returns to ‘normal’, in a matter of days hundreds of thousands of youngsters will have to transition from shell shock back to school. Without immediate and ongoing support, it’s hard to imagine how they will successfully reengage into a normative school year framework.

The economy is hemorrhaging. Businesses, public services and banks were closed or severely disrupted in over 30 cities and towns during the war. Without the infusion of immediate emergency loan funds, with each passing day some 90,000 small businesses—the lifeblood of the North’s economy—are one day closer to being out of business. Creating a ripple effect of unemployment with the most profound, long term economic repercussions.

Part two runs parallel. Every step we take now must take us closer to finally revitalizing and realizing the potential of this area of strategic priority for the State of Israel. The message to our enemies: we are not only here to stay, but we are investing in and building for the future.

We’re not just ‘repairing’ communities, we are working together to empower them. We’re ‘healing’ traumatized children while we create a sustainable platform for them and to thrive.

After extensive consultation with mayors and local authorities throughout the region, the offices of the Prime Minister and Finance Ministry, the Jewish Agency is looking to four far-reaching responses to put every resident in the north on the road to recovery.

*These responses include:*

- 1. A New Tomorrow:** a comprehensive program to move youngsters from trauma to recovery is their reintegration into the formal and informal education systems
- 2. Revitalizing Northern Israel's Economy:** generating massive economic energy by creating an unprecedented evergreen mega loan fund to support economic recovery and growth throughout the north—and head off a serious recession
- 3. Direct Assistance to Frontline Populations:** providing assistance to frontline populations including victims of terror, immigrant combat soldiers and Northern Israel’s new immigrants

- 4. Building Vital Communal Infrastructure:** creating a major funding pool for capital projects and renovation throughout the North to stimulate recovery and create vibrant communities with a quality of life that exceeds that which was destroyed.

In each case, the proposed response builds on existing Jewish Agency programs and expertise, key infrastructure and strategic relationships:

- ⇒ Allowing rapid implementation with minimum bureaucracy and delays
- ⇒ Maximizing and fully leveraging all available resources

In what can only be termed fate, a few months before the outbreak of war, the Jewish Agency incorporated a new group, TSAFONA, charged by the Government of Israel to develop a comprehensive, long-range plan to create a new reality in the Galilee.

The Jewish Agency was asked to undertake this national responsibility because of its on-the-ground resources; because of its work with regional councils in the North to develop long-range plans to stimulate growth and advancement within their communities; because of its capacity and track record in bringing together partnerships between and among the people of Israel and world Jewry to create sweeping change.

**With the best strategic partners already in place, and an advisory council of mayors to be involved each step of the way, ten days ago the Jewish Agency made a firm commitment to the Government to move TSAFONA onto a fast-track in order to jumpstart implementation.** Influential lay leaders and board members across Israel's business and industrial sectors have stepped forward to help ensure efficient, effective implementation.

Initial estimates of damages before the rockets stopped raining down on northern communities were in excess of one billion dollars—this figure is only going to grow. If residents from the North, so utterly devastated by this war, either leave the area—or the some 400,000 displaced residents do not come back—Hezbollah emerges victorious.

Our actions now become a critical part of Israel's front line of defense to ensure this does not happen.

**The Jewish Agency's comprehensive plan to revitalize, restore and rebuild the North:**  
*\$386,895,000 Total Unmet Financial Need*

On the pages that follow are detailed overviews of each response, including cost estimates realizing that as full assessments of the damage become available, they might as well be just the first step on the road to full recovery.