

HELPING THE HELPERS:

Supporting Israeli International Development and Humanitarian Aid Organizations in the Aftermath of October 7th

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OLAM
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SID ISRAEL
Society for International
Development



סיד ישראל
האגודה כפיתוח בינלאומי



UNPRECEDENTED TIMES, UNPRECEDENTED COLLABORATION

Within 24 hours of the Hamas attack on Israel on October 7th, OLAM¹ and SID-Israel² embarked on an unprecedented partnership to support our Israeli partners.

Until then, neither OLAM nor SID-Israel had ever played a role during a crisis in Israel, as our focus is on international development, humanitarian aid, and global volunteering in developing countries. While many of our partners are headquartered in Israel, the reason they belong to one or both of our networks is because of their activities abroad.

“This year saw increased collaboration between OLAM and SID, providing an example for partners within both networks, and strengthening the value provided by both.”

**— Michal Bruck,
NALA Foundation**

Yet, the scale and deeply personal quality of this crisis made it clear — to us and to our partners — that these are extraordinary times, in which we need to come together and provide support at home and to our joint communities. Indeed, 28 of our partners decided to shift their work and lend their global expertise to those in need at home, in Israel.

Regardless of whether they responded to the war, all of our Israeli partners were heavily impacted by it. Almost all had staff who were called up to reserves and/or had loved ones on active or reserve duty. Some had staff who were evacuated from southern and northern Israel and, as of the writing of this report five months later, are still unable to return home safely. A founder of one of our partners was

Front cover photo credits clockwise from left to right: Heroes for Life, IsraAID/Ori Taub, HelpUp, Early Starters International; Page 6: United Hatzalah of Israel



taken hostage along with numerous members of her family, one of whom remains in captivity; another founder was killed.

While these impacts were felt across Israeli society, others were unique to our networks. Many of our Israeli partners, for example, had staff or volunteers who were forced to return prematurely from their placements abroad, negatively impacting projects in the field. Most flights to and from Israel were cancelled, impeding the ability of our partners to collaborate with colleagues and local communities around the world.

Some of our Israeli partners lost funders due to rising anti-Israel sentiment in the broader humanitarian sector. Others experienced increased strain working with international organizations in the field. Triggered by the Hamas attack, some of the staff of our partners even experienced flashbacks and other symptoms of untreated trauma from previous crises in which they had served as direct responders.

*1 **OLAM** is a network of Jewish organizations and individuals committed to international development, humanitarian aid, and global service. Inspired by Jewish values and committed to high ethical standards, OLAM convenes and mobilizes Jewish leaders and organizations to take meaningful action in support of the world's most vulnerable people.*

*2 **The Society for International Development (SID) Israel** is an umbrella organization that brings together Israeli private companies, government agencies, civil society organizations, academic programs, and institutions that work in the spheres of international development and humanitarian aid. SID Israel seeks to enhance Israeli engagement and impact in the developing world.*

Although OLAM and SID have different missions, many of our partners overlap.



"We are trying to continue our work while our house is on fire. The fact that you are concerned for us — international development organizations — is not something I expected... Thank you for doing the amazing work you do and for taking the energy to make sure everyone keeps going."

**— Dr. Tomer Malchi,
CultivAid**

RESPONDING TO FIELD-WIDE NEEDS

As field-builders, OLAM and SID-Israel's role is to **"help the helpers"** and ensure the **long-term viability and vitality of Israel's humanitarian aid and international development ecosystem.**

Thanks to the generous support of several funders, we opened an emergency microgrant pool to support the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of our Israeli partners' staff and/or to preserve the ability of their organizations to maintain ongoing programs. In tandem, we ran a two-part webinar series on navigating the challenges of running an NGO in wartime, focused on financial planning and fundraising.

MICROGRANTS TO SUPPORT STAFF WELL-BEING AND PRESERVE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

Between mid-October and December 2023, OLAM and SID-Israel received 59 microgrant applications. In total, we disbursed **over \$137K in microgrants to 28 different organizations**, with an average grant size of approximately \$5K each.³

These microgrants were used for a variety of purposes, including: psychosocial support for staff; childcare support for the family members of staff who were on reserve duty or whose spouses were

³ The vast majority of funding was disbursed in 2023, with one microgrant carried over into 2024.



"I just wish you all could have witnessed the sheer joy that accompanied the announcement [of the microgrant] this morning to our staff!! When people understood how this would be used and that the support was for them... It means so much."

**— Debra Slonim,
Israel Trauma
Coalition**

on reserve duty; care packages and meal vouchers for staff most directly impacted by the war; hiring temporary support staff; staff trainings on trauma and resiliency; etc. In total, the microgrants **directly impacted over 770 staff** employed by our partners.⁴

One quarter (25%) of the microgrant recipients indicated that, without this funding, they would not have offered any mental health support for their staff. An additional 30% said they would have only offered partial support, but not the full suite of services enabled by the microgrant.

88% of recipients reported that the microgrant was “extremely helpful”⁵ in helping to support their teams during this difficult time and 81% said it was “extremely helpful” in maintaining ongoing operations.

Several organizations shared their belief that the microgrants not only helped their teams survive a very difficult period, but that they will have **long-term impacts on staff satisfaction and work culture.**

For example, AJEEC-NISPED, an Arab-Jewish organization that also trains community leaders from developing countries, used their microgrant to run emotional processing sessions for their Jewish and Arab program directors, first separately and then together. In their post-grant survey, AJEEC-NISPED remarked: “This process strengthens a

⁴ The data presented in this report comes from a variety of sources, including a needs-assessment survey conducted by SID-Israel and OLAM, microgrant applications, and post-grant reports.

⁵ “Extremely helpful,” or five on a five-point Likert scale



“It’s been a challenging few years for internationally oriented NGOs, with Covid and now the war, so the support was instrumental.”

— Danielle Abraham,
Volcani International
Partnerships

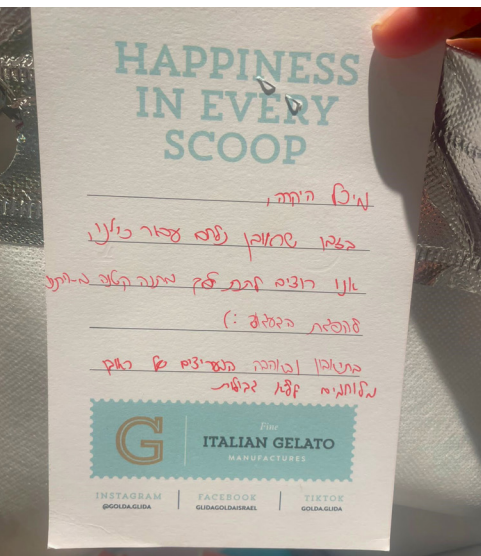
sense of belonging and organizational resilience today and... will become an integral part of work processes in the organization, thus maintaining organizational resilience in the future.”

In addition to the support itself, several organizations also expressed their appreciation for the fact that **the process of applying and receiving the microgrants was quick and simple**. In the words of Rebecca Zeffert, Founder and Executive Director of the Israel-Asia Center: “I would like to say how thankful I am for making the application so easy and straightforward — something few grant-giving organizations have been doing at this time, despite the pressure organizations are under.”

Several organizations also cited the fact that the microgrants sent an important message to the field — organizational leadership and their staff — that someone’s got their back.

THE NEEDS CONTINUE

Five months into the war, the needs of our Israeli partner organizations continue to shift. Those most commonly cited are: fundraising challenges, as Jewish giving shifts towards internal needs; the loss of clients, partners, and/or funders in the broader international development and humanitarian aid sector, who are looking to distance themselves from Israel; communications dilemmas around how to best frame and explain their work with vulnerable populations in developing countries at this moment; etc.



Among our Israeli partners, October 7th and the subsequent war have had a different impact on those who pivoted their work to meet internal needs in Israel versus those who continued to focus exclusively on their work abroad. As a general rule, the former has experienced rapid and unexpected budgetary growth. While this is a positive development, it nevertheless comes with its own organizational challenges and raises the question of how to ensure that those organizations' global work isn't left by the wayside. In contrast, the latter has experienced diminished fundraising prospects and, in some cases, actual budgetary shortfalls.

“As with all [Israeli] organizations serving development goals outside Israel, the onslaught meant we had to stop fundraising efforts for several months. The grant therefore served as a critical lifeline, contributing to our ability to maintain our operations.”

**— Elana Silver,
Tevel**

As these needs evolve, OLAM and SID-Israel will continue to devise strategies to address them, through trainings, convenings, and other field-wide interventions; thereby, ensuring the continuation of a thriving Israeli international development and humanitarian aid ecosystem, serving vulnerable populations in Israel and around the world.



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