

Celebrating 73 years of Israel's Independence

April 2021

Dear partners and friends,

We are about to celebrate the 73rd anniversary of the independence of the State of Israel. After a challenging year with the COVID pandemic, it now seems that the exit from that unprecedented crisis is within reach. Although the health concerns are largely behind us here in Israel, the socioeconomic ramifications of the crisis are beginning to become visible as the country struggles with a deep recession.

The Rashi Foundation has set itself the goal of taking a key role in dealing with these ramifications and in assisting populations that have been particularly hurt by them. We strive to leave no one behind while Israel begins to stride forward. We have identified a number of issues critical to Israel's social resilience, in which we will focus our investment in the coming years.

Education - with an emphasis on hybrid schools and 21st century skills

The prolonged closure of the education system during the crisis has severely affected children of all ages, thus widening the gaps that already exist. At the same time, it has aroused the understanding in the schools, in the municipalities, and in the Ministry of Education that the crisis is also an opportunity to accelerate long-needed processes of change. Together with our partners, we are examining and implementing innovative initiatives for the transition from teaching-oriented education to learning-oriented education, integrating technology into education, strengthening self-learning skills and personal, emotional, and social development, and more.

Employment for young people

The immediate need is to return to the labor force the young people who lost their jobs when the crisis struck. Many of them are residents of the periphery. Israel is facing extensive changes in the field of employment. This is in light of global trends that necessitate new job skills, and in light of the Coronavirus crisis, which has increased the unemployment rate and has led employers to re-examine employment processes and work force parameters. In this reality, we aim to provide a key new mechanism to increase employment significantly in Israel's socioeconomic periphery. We will focus on helping the individual to design his/her career path through training, acquisition of skills, and job placement. The initiative will drive the development of a regional employment-promoting ecosystem which leverages the tools and infrastructures already in use by the Israeli Employment Service. These include data collection and analysis, nationwide availability of employment services, and a toolbox for efficient placement of job seekers and for cultivation of ongoing relationships with employers in all sectors of the job market.

Domestic violence

Since social distress has intensified significantly due to the COVID crisis, there has been a dramatic increase in calls to domestic violence help centers. The reality is that existing services are unable to meet the full needs of the victims. We are promoting an initiative to bring all services needed by victims of domestic violence together under one roof in each district. This is to be done through development of digital solutions, collection and analysis of data, and establishment of assistance and counseling centers. This integrated whole constitutes the missing link in the existing services. We are now working together with the Ministry of Labor, Welfare and Social Services and with other partners to establish regional centers for prevention, treatment, and counseling for victims of domestic violence.

Strengthening communities and local authorities

The Corona crisis has highlighted the important role the local authority plays in providing effective responses to its residents. It also highlighted the power community initiatives have to impact the lives of community members, both during emergencies and times of routine. The initiatives we advance with our partners are designed to create an infrastructure of knowledge and human capital that will enable the growth of caring communities and expand opportunities for the residents of the geographical-social periphery.

This is a wonderful opportunity to thank once again our many partners in the government and the local authorities, the business sector, and the philanthropic world who have joined with us in the past year, both in addressing immediate needs and in driving new initiatives to answer Israel's deep social challenges.

Together, we are poised to succeed in bringing about the change that will contribute to building a strong society in a prosperous State of Israel.

With our best wishes to you for a very happy Israel Independence Day.

François Leven
President

Shaul Shani
Chairman

Michal Cohen
General Director